LONDON'S TOWN HALLS

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NOTE

The survey of London's Town Halls was carried out by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, which merged with English Heritage in 1999. The project team consisted of Joanna Smith, Jonathan Clarke and June Warrington, with photography by Sid Barker, James O Davies and Derek Kendall. The project culminated in an exhibition entitled 'London's Town Halls: The architecture of local government from 1840 to the present', held at the RIBA Heinz Gallery from the 3 June to the 24 July 1999. A catalogue with the same name was published to coincide with the exhibition.

This report is a compilation of all of the survey reports written for the project. Additional material on these buildings, including photographs, measured drawings and notes, are contained within the NBR Index files, which are available for consultation at the London offices of the National Monuments Record, 55 Blandford Street London W1H 3AF (tel: 020 7208 8200, fax: 0207224 5333 Email: nmrlondon@english-heritage.org.uk).

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95802**

BARKING & DAGENHAM **NGR: TQ 4430 8390**

OFF EAST STREET

BARKING TOWN HALL

SUMMARY
Barking Town Hall is a decidedly old-fashioned building for its date. It was finished in 1958, the result of an interrupted development, having actually been designed in 1936. Herbert Jackson and Reginald Edmond's original competition-winning design had been for a neo-Georgian style courtyard-plan building, and it was they who revamped the scheme, with minor modifications to its plan, the external details and interior finishes, in the 1950s. The brick-and-stone town hall forms a large rectangular block, dominated by a high clock tower, on an island site between East Street and Axe Street. The council offices occupy three ranges while the assembly hall, completed in 1961, makes up the fourth side of the grouping. In contrast to the rest of the building, the hall was designed in a rather more contemporary 1950s manner. The interior of the town hall is a hybrid of 1930s formal planning and understated 1950s detailing. Consequently, although the principal spaces are given an appropriate level of finish the result, is rather low key.

DESCRIPTION

Local government in Barking in the late 19th century was both active and developed, with a tradition of public works established by the local board, formed in 1888, and continued under the urban district council, created in 1897. The area's sense of civic identity was sharpened in the inter war years when Barking came under threat of redivision or annexation as a consequence of the development of the London County Council's Becontree estate. This vast estate, built between 1919 and 1938, spread over Barking, Ilford and Dagenham. As a consequence Barking sought to strengthen its position, applying for municipal borough status in 1931 (granted that same year) and acquiring addition powers in 1933, an approach also adopted by Dagenham Urban District Council. This assertion of a strong municipal identity also forms the backdrop to the consideration from 1932 of a new town hall to replace the purpose-built offices built on East Street in 1894. By 1935 these deliberations had got as far as the appointment of the architect H V Lanchester, who recommended an architectural competition to determine the design of the new building, held the following year.

The site was a good one, an island in the town centre large enough to contain all the buildings and to provide space for a setting. Furthermore the brief stated that a clock tower was 'desired' and the facing material was to be in brick, and set a cost limit of £160,000. Lanchester awarded the first premium to Herbert Jackson and Reginald Edmonds for a 'design of remarkable directness and simplicity' similar in many respects to Lanchester and Lodge's own Beckenham Town Hall (completed 1932).[1] Jackson and Edmonds were a successful team of Birmingham-based architects although according to his obituary it was Jackson who had the major hand in the Barking competition.[2] Their scheme was a traditional one by the standards of the 1930s, especially when compared with the neighbouring Dagenham Civic Centre, built 1936-7 in a stripped classical manner. One factor that may have influenced the Barking design was its siting within the historic town centre.

Construction of the building was initially delayed by a public enquiry and work had barely commenced when war broke out in 1939 bringing construction to a halt. Only the foundations and part of the basement had been completed and these areas were then converted into air-raid headquarters and public shelters for the duration of the war. When the Ministry of Housing and Local Government granted permission to complete the building in 1954 consideration was given to possible alterations. Any radical departure from the original plan was limited by the existing structure but there was some scope for internal rearrangement and a different treatment of the elevations. The decision to make only minor changes to the layout and to persist with load-bearing external brick walls seems to have been made for economic reasons. As a consequence the building must have appeared somewhat out dated as soon as it was finished, and any attempt to accommodate the changing architectural fashions of the post-war era was restricted to its fittings and finishes.

The completion of the council offices began in April 1954 and the building opened for business in December 1958. It was built by direct labour, one of the largest schemes to have been carried out by a local authority works department at the time. As this part of the building neared completion the money for the second phase, the assembly hall, was granted. This structure, now known as the Broadway Theatre, was completed in 1961. The combined cost was £714, 500, the council offices alone having cost £520,000.

The three ranges comprising the office building are all of three storeys with half-basements. There is a steel frame to the centre section, with load-bearing brick walls and hollow-tile reinforced-concrete floors throughout. The nine-bay symmetrical front elevation has a simple arched entrance with resited old oak gates.[3] The three centre bays and the end bays are stepped forward. Soaring up from the pantiled hipped roof is a tall tower, with a long lower stage with clock faces on all sides, topped by a Lutyens-esque cupola. The arrangement of the front elevation differs from the competition winning design, which had a broader entrance of five bays, a semi-circular entrance porch with a balcony above, and carved figures flanking the second-floor window. This was more squarely neo-Georgian than the completed building, which has a more Baroque sensibility in the scrolled pediments to the first-floor window surrounds. The long seventeen-bay return elevations are relieved by the stepping forward of the three bays aligned with the tower, which on the north side contain a secondary entrance. All three elevations have plinths of dark red brick, with lighter red brick above and the window heads in a still lighter shade.

The Broadway Theatre is also of red brick with stone dressings, but it is treated in a more Festival of Britain style creating the impression that the two parts are of significantly different dates. It was originally to have had a central portico of six columns but this was simplified to three tall segmental-headed stone-faced window recesses to the first floor and a flat canopy with a balcony above. The building has a flat roof, partly faced with copper-faced panels on the return elevations, which also have tall metal-framed canted windows to light the hall.

The interior of the council block retains a formal layout, with the principal spaces on the first floor – that is committee rooms to the front and the council chamber to the rear of the front range, and a ceremonial approach formed by the entrance hall and stairs. But such formality is not sustained in the low-key 1950s styling. The main entrance and stair hall make an impressive space, rising through three storeys, with marble-lined walls on the lower level, terrazzo floor tiles in a pattern of square and rectangular columns faced in Ashburton and Travertine marble. The

wall behind the reception area has a marble panel and a pair of side-lit stairs rise to the north and south sides, finished with a balustrade of acid-etched glass panels and brass supports. Directly above the reception area is a landing-cum-anteroom for the council chamber, panelled in teak and elm detailed with built-in planting boxes. The rectangular side-lit council chamber has the usual horseshoe plan of fixed seating, originally for 40 members, although the 1930s design had a less common collegiate arrangement. Great care was taken with the acoustics of the chamber, given a raking suspended ceiling and acoustic panels to the rear walls. The mayor's dais has seating dating from 1931 (made to commemorate the incorporation of the Council) and is backed with a handsomely carved and painted coat of arms on a field of marble cedar. The public gallery was originally intended to be on three sides to accommodate a large number of spectators, but was redesigned on a smaller scale and now occupies only one side, the west, of the chamber. The other council rooms retain some original furniture and fittings. In the original scheme the mayor's parlour was placed at the centre front with the committee rooms to the side, but this was reversed in the final design. These committee rooms have the usual arrangement of retractable partition walls. The chamber, committee rooms, mayor's parlour and members' room are linked by corridors that return around the two light wells that flank the stair. The departmental offices are spread over all four floors, the Treasurers department on the ground floor given a separate entrance for the pay office.

In the local government reforms of 1965 Barking was merged with Dagenham to form a new local authority. Unusually, the civic buildings of both districts were retained, and the decision to hold the council meetings alternately in Barking Town Hall and Dagenham Civic Centre has ensured that both have kept their council chambers and other civic spaces.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 5th September 1998

NOTES

[1] *The Builder*, 6 Nov 1936, 880.

2. *The Independant*, Saturday 3rd June 1989.

3. Taken from the Leet House, demolished in 1926.

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Victoria History of the Counties of England, Essex v (London 1966) 242.

GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95803**

BARKING & DAGENHAM **NGR: TQ 4952 8686**

WOOD LANE

DAGENHAM CIVIC CENTRE

SUMMARY

Dagenham Civic Centre is one of outer London's quintessential 1930's civic buildings. Designed by E. Berry Webber in the stripped classical manner and built in 1936-7, it freely mixes traditional and modern elements with the usual debt to continental influences. The long façade is dominated by a giant central Portland stone portico, flanked by brick wings and, unlike most of London's town halls, the building benefits from a spacious and open setting. The use of brick was intended to reflect the domestic character of the area, dominated by the London County Council's inter war housing estate at Becontree, whilst the portico was intended to confer a civic identity to an area that had had only come into being during the 1920s.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

In 1921 Dagenham was 'a straggling parish of 9, 000' but by 1938 it had become 'a prosperous town with a population of more that 103,000'.[1] The principal cause of this rapid growth was the development of the Becontree housing estate, comprising over 25,000 dwellings built between 1919 and 1938 and described at the time as the largest municipal housing estate in the world. Over half of the area of the estate lay in Dagenham, the remainder being in Barking and Ilford. In the decade after its formation in 1926, the local authority, Dagenham Urban District Council, responded to the challenges of this rapid urbanisation with a policy of extensive public works. But Becontree caused serious administrative problems for all the local authorities involved and prompted proposals for the creation of a single new authority. This idea was unpopular with the existing bodies, and in 1937 Dagenham UDC sought to strengthen its position by applying to become a municipal borough, a status granted the following year. The construction of a prestigious new civic centre therefore served a dual purpose, providing the necessary accommodation and asserting a distinct municipal identity.

The authority's choice as architect, E Berry Webber, had then a growing reputation for public buildings, evidenced by his well-received Southampton Civic Centre (designed in competition 1928, built 1929-39).[2] The site for the new civic centre was open ground on the edge of Becontree Heath on which it was proposed to build a group of related buildings - municipal offices, an assembly hall, library and fire station. Webber designed the municipal offices as a long range, placed at an angle to the road, with the council chamber projecting to the rear. The unbuilt assembly hall and library were to have been independent units to the rear and side. The style of the building was characterised by the press at the time as being 'essentially modern, as befits such a community as Dagenham', an all-stone civic centre being thought out of place amongst the 'urbanities and domesticities of Dagenham', although it was also noted that 'it has

not kicked over all the traces of tradition'.[3] The first part (the municipal offices) was opened in October 1937, having cost £98,000 and been built by Messrs Allen Fairhead and Sons Ltd. of Enfield. The fire station, constructed to the south of the offices, was completed in 1938 but the outbreak of war probably prevented the other blocks from being completed. However, a civic or assembly hall was still under consideration when a substantial detached extension was built to the south east of the council offices in 1963. The new three-storey brick-faced building was designed by Berry Webber in 1958-60 as offices for the public health department and was linked to the main building by a two-storey bridge. The other noteworthy addition to the group of civic buildings was an underground Civil Defence complex built in 1954 to the east of the main building. In the local government reforms in 1965 Dagenham was joined with Barking. Unusually the civic buildings in both areas were retained, with the council meeting alternately at Dagenham and Barking, ensuring that both buildings have retained functioning council chambers and mayor's parlours.

Dagenham Civic Centre is a three-storey building with semi-basements, of steel-framed construction faced with Mulberry coloured stock bricks with Portland stone dressing. It has a well proportioned façade composed of two elements, expressing the building's dual function - a portico symbolising the ceremonial side flanked by simpler brick wings forming the 'business' areas housing the offices. The long elevation is treated in a similar fashion to a Georgian terrace, with a strong central accent, regularly spaced windows punctuated by down pipes, unified by a low stone string course and a stone-faced semi basement. The portico comprises four slender cluster columns rising to a flat roof, with a frieze ornamented by carved shallow relief panels depicting scenes of local industry, executed by William Aumonier & Sons. Behind this is a large glazed area lighting the stair, with metal glazing bars in a pattern that echoes the English bond of the surrounding brickwork. This area was given such emphasis because it was intended to be both the ceremonial entrance and the centrepiece of 'a spreading frontage' that included a detached assembly hall and library to the rear. The brick wings have good quality detailing such as the first floor cast-iron balconettes and flat guards with spear heads over the semi-basement windows. The return elevations are distinguished by bold full-height glazed semi-circular stair windows, whilst the rear elevation has a projecting semi-circular council chamber at the first floor, raised on piers to create a covered area to the rear entrance. When first completed the building had blue tiled 'lily ponds' to either end, illuminated by pylons and lanterns, but these had gone by the 1960s, replaced by less exotic flower beds.

The building has a simple symmetrical plan, with the central section given over to the entrance hall and main stair at the lower level and a double-height hall above, flanked by three floors of offices off an axial central corridor and end stairs. The first-floor hall is a monumental space, lined throughout in Botticino marble, crossed by bridges at the second-floor level linking the office ranges and giving access to the public gallery. It has marble-faced rectangular piers with bold geometric reliefs on their inner faces, echoing the painted step pattern of the ceiling, recently restored to its original colour scheme. For drama, this space, which also acts as the vestibule to the council chamber, has few equals among London's civic buildings.

The ceremonial entrance to the council chamber is set in the east wall of the vestibule, flanked by side doors for less formal usage. The council chamber has a bold D-shaped plan, with a gallery, carried on slender columns, facing the mayoral dais against the straight wall. Much attention was paid to acoustics and lighting, the latter being a subtle mixture of natural light from

the clerestorey windows, artifical light from uplighters, concealed lighting beneath the gallery and in the plaster ceiling, and built-in lights in the gallery balustrade. The distinctive original furniture and fixed seating survives, including a mayor's chair on a giant scale, surmounted by urn finials that are repeated on the door surrounds, beneath a small fabric canopy. The mayor's parlour, originally the chairman's room, is to the front of the building on the first floor. This is faced with Betula wood and retains its original recessed dish lighting and electric fire with marble surround. Adjoining the parlour is a suite of three interconnecting committee rooms, which have undergone some modernisation, but which would always have been simply finished spaces. As would be expected the distinction between the 'ceremonial' and 'business' areas of the building are clearly marked by a changing level and quality of finish. However, the offices areas are by no means devoid of interest, the most notable feature being the pair of well-lit semi-circular end stairs, which have terrazzo treads and a stepped dado of faience tiles, with bronze handrails.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photographs by Sid Barker
Recorded 12th August 1998

NOTES

[1] figures given in opening by Sir Kingsley Wood, Minister of Health on the opening of the building October 16th 1937, quoted widely in the press at the time.

[2] Berry Webber also produced designs for town halls at Peterborough, Reading and Chichester. In London he was also responsible for Hammersmith Town Hall, built 1938-9.

[3] *Municipal Journal* , October 15th 1937.

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RIBA British Architectural Library, Drawings Collection, plans, sections and elevation of the council offices, fire station and office extension.

RIBA, BAL photograph collection.

DCMS, Listed Building description 1981.

The Architect and Buildings News, 5 Dec 1937 (illn)

The Builder, 22 Oct 1937 (illn)

Municipal Journal, 15 Oct 1937.

Victoria History of the Counties of England, Essex v, (London 1960) 270-2, 293.

GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95801

BARKING & DAGENHAM NGR: TQ 4430 8410

BARKING

EAST STREET

BARKING MAGISTRATES COURT (FORMERLY BARKING TOWN HALL)

This two-storey gabled building with attics and basements was erected by the Barking Local Board in 1894 as public offices and a library. It was designed by C.J. Dawson in an early Renaissance manner. The red-brick-and-stone building has slightly projecting gabled wings with oriel windows at the first floor, a central stone portico with a clock tower above. A secondary entrance in the northernmost bay originally served the public library. The style of the building is reminiscent of Barking's most important secular building, Eastbury Manor, although variations on a Renaissance theme were popular for civic buildings in the last decades of the 19th century. The library occupied the north end of the building, whilst the offices had a boardroom and committee room on the ground floor with a grand open-well stair serving the offices of the officials on the first floor. The building cost £12,000 and was built by Kirk and Randall. Barking Local Board, formed in 1888, played an active role in the area's development, making improvements to the town and undertaking other public works, including the construction of the offices, an approach continued under its successor, Barking Urban District Council, created in 1897. The building was superseded in 1958 by a new Town Hall after which it was sold to Essex County Council and converted to a magistrates court.

Report by Joanna Smith

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DCMS, Listed Buildings description.

The Building News, 19th October 1894 (illn).

Victoria History of the Counties of England, Essex v (London 1966) 242.

Colin Cunningham, *Victorian and Edwardian Town Halls*, (London 1981)147-150.

GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95806**

BARNET **NGR: TQ 2767 9220**

FRIERN BARNET LANE

FRIERN BARNET MUNICIPAL OFFICES

These modest municipal offices, set back behind a small forecourt to maximise their visual impact, were built by Friern Barnet Urban District Council under difficult wartime conditions in 1939-41. Constructed in a traditional style with load-bearing brick walls and Ketton stone detailing, the building's concave shape, its hipped slate roof and central copper-faced clock tower, recall Ralph Knott's County Hall of 1912-33. The council apparently did not want a 'modernistic' building for its new offices, and awarded the first premium in a competition held in 1937, on the recommendation of the assessor Charles Cowles Voysey, to the simple neo-Georgian design by Sir John Brown and A E Henson. Economy of planning and construction were paramount, so the site of the old council offices, an 18th-century building known as The Priory, was reused. Some other structures at the rear of the site, including a fire station and a works yard, were retained. The building's planning follows the well-established formulas of the interwar years, with an emphasis on symmetry and formality, being a long single range with a rear wing housing the council chamber. Inevitably the main architectural effort is concentrated on the chamber and the preceding main stairs and entrance hall, most notably the double-height stair hall, with green marble hexagonal columns and a coffered plaster ceiling. However, this was more modest than originally intended due to rising wartime costs. Since the formation of the London Borough of Barnet in 1965 the building has been used as departmental offices with the consequent loss of fittings in the council chamber and the subdividision of the rates hall. However, many rooms retain doors and, where applicable, panelling, whilst the civic set piece, the entrance and stair hall, survives to evoke the modest dignity of an interwar suburban London authority.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 17th September 1998

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barnet Local History Library, photograph albums - 'The Priory', 1939 (L9482), 'New Municipal Offices', 1941 (L9638), untitled album, 1941 (L9668); Friern Barnet Urban District Council Minutes, 1938-1942.

The Builder, 9 Jul 1937 (illn).

GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95804

BARNET NGR: TQ 2278 8920

THE BURROUGHS

HENDON TOWN HALL

The construction of Hendon Town Hall in 1901 (then Hendon Municipal Buildings), like many outer London town halls of that date, represented the transition from makeshift meeting space to purpose built, permanent premises for a local government body that had evolved into an Urban District Council. From its formation in 1879 Hendon Local Board met initially in the Hendon Institute, Brent Street, and by 1886 or 1890[1] in the old workhouse on The Burroughs. By the late 1890s, following the creation of Hendon Urban District from Hendon Local Board in 1895 and the commensurate increase in district size and quantity of business[2], the institute was felt to be inadequate, both spatially and symbolically. In 1899 the Council, seeking larger, more dignified premises that would reflect the UDC's increased importance to the community[3], set a limited architectural competition. Eight architects were invited to submit designs and tenders for a contract limited to £12,000, in which offices were to be the central feature of the municipal buildings. Other elements in the specified design included a public hall, public library, technical institute, public baths and, for eventual erection[4], a fire station. Future extensions, such as the fire station, were required to be shown on a block plan accompanying other drawings.

Arthur Beresford Pite (1860-1949), was chosen as assessor to the competition. Pite was an important Edwardian architect, who until 1897 had been John Belcher's (1841-1913) chief assistant, and who would become Professor of Architecture at the Royal College of Art and Director of the Brixton School of Building[5]. He awarded the first premium of £75 to Henry Thomas Hare, the second premium (£50) to Messrs. Cheers, and the third (£25) to G. Hornblower of Hendon. Hare was regarded as one of the most successful competition men, gaining a string of commissions for public buildings in the 1890s and by the first decade of the new century was well known as the foremost architect of public libraries.[6]

The Council, however, differed in their assessment of the competition, selecting in January 1900[7] the designs of Thomas Henry Watson (1840-1913) of Hampstead[8], largely it would appear, on the basis that his scheme was one of the few that could be carried out for £12,000, which was the essence of the contract[9]. *The Builder* however lauded his English Baroque inspired scheme (designated no.4), saying it Aseems to fulfil the conditions and to utilise the site to its best advantage. The only fault of this restful design, with some pretty detail, opined this magazine, was the projection to the ends of the main facade causing an unpleasant leak to the otherwise nice line of the roof.[10] Watson was an architect of some standing, having served as President of the Architectural Association, 1870-1, and was, at the time of his selection, district surveyor of St.George, Hanover Square, and surveyor to the Pentonville Estate.[11] His principal works include St Peter's Church, Cricklewood, St Luke's Church, Deptford; Whitney Court, Herefordshire, and working class dwellings for the Portland Industrial Dwellings Company in St. Marylebone, 1899-1903.[12] Hendon Public Offices would appear to be his only foray into the field of municipal design.

The Council, selected the lowest tender of those seven received for the erection of the building - £11,309 by Kingerlee and Sons of Oxford. Initially they proposed to apply for a loan of £15,000 to cover the anticipated costs, but subsequent public outcry - voiced most boisterously by the Hendon Ratepayers Association, who also objected to the seemingly unlimited amount of spare room[13] allocated within Watson's proposals - forced a reduction of the amount to £13,500.

The foundation stone of Hendon's new municipal buildings was laid in 1900, by Mr John Evans, chairman of the council. The official opening took place on 13 November 1901. The opening ceremony, performed by Mr F W Roper, chairman of Hendon District Council, was a lavish affair, attended by a large number of residents:

> The exterior of the offices was made gay with flags, and arches were formed of fairy lamps. These were lighted at dusk, and the effect was very pleasing... On entering the offices one could scarcely imagine that it was a municipal structure. ...a choice collection of palms, ferns, chrysanthemums, and other plants... were effectively arranged... The chief part of the building upon which attention had been centred was the Council chamber - the room in which the reception by the Chairman in the evening took place. It was luxuriously furnished, but although the Council has sometimes been accused of extravagance, it must not be supposed that the money of the ratepayers had been spent in making preparations for the opening.[14]

During the ceremony, both the architect and contractors were applauded by one councillor for producing a building that boasted splendid value for money, solid workmanship, and which would stand the test of time. Another councillor, in seconding this, elevated the building to even nobler heights, saying the mind would be educated to higher ideals, and no doubt it would assist the Council considerably in maturing measures for the benefit of the district.[15]

In 1932, following Hendon's transformation from a UDC to a Municipal Borough the buildings officially became the town hall. By this time the building was proving too small to house all the municipal departments, and in 1934 it was extended in matching style. In time this proved insufficient and further extensions were made in 1960, also in the same style as the original. In 1965, with the formation of the London Borough of Barnet, every department except for that of the Town Clerk and Borough Treasurer were removed to the council offices of the other four local authorities comprising the new borough.[16]

A two storey building with attics, the town hall is in an essentially Free Renaissance style, but with some elements derived from late Gothic or Elizabethan traditions. *The Hendon Finchley Times*, reporting on Watson's stylistic choice, which he explained at the opening ceremony, restated it thus:

> Indeed, as to its character, the building spoke for itself; the problem which he as architect, had placed before him was to express in the building some of those ideas of government which were the first fruits of the Renaissance, and at the same time he was not to lose sight of the fact that Hendon possessed historical associations with the heroic Knights Templars of the Crusades. These ideas

> therefore found expression in the Renaissance detail of the building, blended with those mullioned windows which they generally associated with medieval times.[17]

Red pressed facing bricks, supplied by the Heather Brick and Terra Cotta Co., Ashby -de-la-Zouch, and stone bands and dressings are employed to exuberant effect. The principal feature of the seven-bay front elevation is the ensemble of the two first-floor canted oriel windows linked by an iron balustraded balcony set over a central portico, all of which are executed entirely in stone. Watson concentrated the decorative treatment of the building in this central block in order to keep within the cost threshold stipulated by the council[18]. The windows of this central five-bay block, and those on the first floor of the gabled wings that flank it, are mullioned and transomed with ogee heads. Stone balustrading surmounts the central block, and set back behind this is a slate gambrel roof with a timber lantern with two weather vanes.

The design of the public offices exemplifies, on the ground floor, a concern for ease of public access to the principal offices of appropriate departments, and on the first floor, a desire to site the civic spaces at the front and (north) side, on account of their importance. Accordingly, on the ground floor, the entrance vestibule opened directly onto the rate collectors and accountants offices to the right, and the clerks and enquiry office of the engineers department to the left, both of which were located at the front of the building. The entrance vestibule also opened onto the principle stair from which the first floor civic spaces were reached – the processional route. To the rear of the building were located the drawing office, building inspectors office, medical officer and sanitary inspectors office, laboratory, cloakrooms and toilets etc. On both floors, the aspect of the principal offices was determined *vis-à-vis* their intended functions: the south wing accommodating those departments or offices in use during daylight hours (such as the drawing office), and the north wing housing those rooms used principally in the evening (such as the Committee room).[19]

The entrance hall has been significantly altered, mainly through the addition of modern partitions, (1930s?) joinery and a recent suspended ceiling, all of which have diminished the original size and presumed grandeur as suggested by the plans. The main staircase, which occupies the space between the two rear wings, appears also to have been extensively remodelled. The plans suggest that originally this was of double-return form, with two smaller flights leading from the landing to the principal or first floor, but elements of this were re-jigged in the mid-1930s to produce an open-well stair with quarter-space landings. The design is revivalist, with stylized wrought ironwork supporting a bronze handrail.[20] The form of the original stair balusters was possibly similar to the original balustrade, preserved on the first floor landing, which itself may be re-sited.

On the principal or first floor, the Council chamber, occupies the central block five-bays of the façade. The offices of the clerk originally occupied the south wing, and the committee rooms, members' library and cloak rooms the north wing. The council chamber is fairly well preserved, although the wall dividing it from a former committee room that originally incorporated a chimney stack was removed in the 1930s to allow room for a small public gallery. The original chamber seating and fittings have been replaced. A first floor plan, published in *The Builder*, and early photographs of the room[21]show it originally had a conventional semi-circular arrangement, with the mayor's dais backing onto the front wall. Interestingly, the coved ceiling was designed from the start to display its queen-post constructional form: in the two centre trusses the iron

queen rods project through the ceiling pendants and connect with iron tie-rods that span the width of the room. The adjoining mayor's parlour retains it's wood panelling and what appears to be the original furniture.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 17th February 1998

NOTES

1.The date 1886, specified in *The Hendon and Finchley Times, Supplement*, 15 November 1901, 1, is at variance with the date 1890 cited in *V CH*, Middlesex V (1976), 31, which is itself sourced from *Kelly's Directory of Middlesex* (1890).

2. *The Hendon and Finchley Times*, 15 Nov 1901, 1.

3. Stewart Gillies and Pamela Taylor, *Hendon [Child's Hill, Golders Green and Mill Hill]: A Pictorial History* (1993), Barnet Libraries Arts and Museums: Phillimore (not paginated, photograph 77).

4. *The Builder*, 23 Dec 1899, 588.

5. Richard Fellows, *Edwardian Architecture: Style and Technology* (London, 1995), 15-16.

6. *Ibid*, 22.

7. Obituary of T H Watson in *The Builder*, 17 Jan 1913, 98.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *The Hendon and Finchley Times*, 15 Nov 1901, 1.

10. *The Builder*, 23 Dec 1899, 588.

11. *The Building News*, 21 Mar 1890, 406; *RIBA Journal*, 1913, 195.

12. *The Builder*, 23 Dec 1899, 588.

13. *The Hendon Advertiser*, 15 June 1900, reported on another of Hendon's spasmodic protests against extravagance in local administration - a meeting held the previous Thursday in the Public Hall, the Burroughs, and attended by Councillors, the Hendon Ratepayers Association and other members of the public.

14. *The Hendon and Finchley Times*, 15 Nov 1901, 1.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Hendon Civic News*, (Special Issue) March 1965.

17. *The Hendon and Finchley Times*, 15 Nov 1901, 1.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *The Builder*, 12 November 1904.

20. Borough of Hendon Minute Book, May 1933 - October 1935: Special (Town Hall) Committee, 19 June 1933, 633. The contract for the main staircase was awarded to Messrs. Garton & Thorne, for the provision of a balustrade comprising a bronze hand rail and wrought iron panelling, subject to the incorporation of the al Bearings in the centre panel on each side of the staircase.

21. Barnet Archives and Local Studies Centre photograph collection.

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Barnet Archives and Local Studies Centre, photographic collection; cuttings collection; Hendon Municipal Borough, minutes of the Special (Town Hall) Committee 1933-5.

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95810**

BEXLEY **NGR: TQ 495 750**

BROADWAY

BEXLEY CIVIC CENTRE

This sprawling, low-rise brown-brick complex, with black slate cladding, is amongst the most functional of the civic centres devised in the wake of the 1965 local government reforms. Like many of the new London Boroughs, Bexley opted to centralise their services on one site, in a scheme devised by the Borough Architect R.D. Thornley. However, chronic inflation in the 1970s pushed the costs too high, and a drastically pruned scheme was built instead, omitting the more expensive elements such as a civic suite. The first phase of the centre was completed in 1977, to which two subsequent phases have been added. The interior has the essentially no-frills character of most 1970s public architecture. There is a plainly-finished, first-floor council chamber, without fixed seating to allow for other uses, and a mayor's parlour, indistinguishable from any other office space except for the display cases containing the civic plate and the work of local artists on its wall. One echo of early ambitions is the council's mace, commissioned in the 1960s by the new borough, a strikingly modern piece of design.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 3rd December 1998

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GREATER LONDON

NBR INDEX NO: 95809

BEXLEY

NGR: TQ 516 746

CRAYFORD

CRAYFORD ROAD

CRAYFORD TOWN HALL

This modest outer London council office was built as a club and mess room for Vickers Ltd in 1915. Armaments manufacturing started at Crayford in 1888, was taken over in 1897 Vickers Ltd., and reached its peak during World War I. The former mess room is a two-storey brick building, with attics and a partial basement, and a hipped roof in the Queen Anne style. In 1929 the building was bought by Crayford Urban District Council, as is commemorated by a plaque on the front of the building, and presumably then underwent such alterations as were necessary for its new use. It is possible that the front portico and balcony were added at this date, or if already in existence, were beefed up with details such as the flagstaff and short balustrade, to give the façade a degree of civic dignity. The large hall on the ground floor, presumably the original arrangement, was retained as the 'town hall' proper with offices to the upper storey. Later alterations include the insertion of large dormer windows, effectively turning the attic into a third storey. The building has remained in municipal use, occupied by the successor to Crayford UDC, the London Borough of Bexley. It was completely refurbished in 1995.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photographs by Sid Barker
Recorded 3rd December 1998

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 88136

BRENT NGR: TQ 1973 8670

FORTY ROAD

BRENT TOWN HALL (FORMERLY WEMBLEY TOWN HALL)

A quintessentially moderne town hall built soon after, and influenced by, the Dudok-inspired Hornsey Town Hall. It was designed by Clifford Strange who was awarded first prize in an architectural competition inaugurated in 1935 by Wembley Urban District Council.

In anticipation of its upgrading to status of Municipal Borough (achieved in 1937) Wembley Urban District Council decided in 1934 to centralise its offices which were then scattered around the district. In 1935 it acquired a 5 acre site on Forty Lane, about a mile from the main shopping centre - and inaugurated an open architectural competition for municipal offices, a fire station, library and public hall - in effect a small civic centre, although that term was not used in the conditions. Stanley Hamp, of the architectural practice Collcutt & Hamp, was appointed as assessor. The conditions of the competition stressed the need for economy of planning and construction, and simplicity of architectural expression in communicating the various municipal and official functions. Despite this, many of the 100 submitted designs were deemed as both dated and inappropriate; *The Builder* noted many still appear to have the pre-war type of municipal building with architectural features and trimmings in mind as the most appropriate treatment for a suburban district.[1]

The winning design, by Clifford Strange, set the buildings well back from Forty Lane to allow for quietness in the offices, and to provide them with an effective setting behind a wide fore-court, which also served as a car park. Construction did not commence until autumn 1937; the anticipated costs - in particular the necessity for the main hall and the expensive materials - forming the main obstacle. Consequently, the planned fire station was omitted from the scheme, although this did allow for more extensive landscaped grounds to the east of the site. Councillor Gauntlett, chair of the Town Hall Committee, laid the foundation stone in October 1937 - the last public function of the Urban District Council before it became Wembley Borough Council. In 1939, Wembley Town Hall was officially opened.

Strange's scheme consisted of three distinct and self-contained units: municipal offices, public library, and an assembly hall to the rear. The planning and circulation was simple but effective, hinging around the council chamber in the centre of the building on an upper level, with the main approach to the assembly hall from the entrance hall on the front of the building. This arrangement not only exploited the slope of the site - enabling an imposing flight of stairs from the entrance hall to a foyer on the first floor - but also placed the council chamber and assembly hall on the quieter, rearward portion. Externally the building is striking for its long, austere, three-storey front, with a tall staircase tower recessed slightly behind the flanking wings. Inside, the repeated use of borrowed light, internal glazing, and high quality materials, including warm wood veneers and Botticino marble combine to serene, dignified effect. In these, and other details - the exterior use of pale yellow Lincolnshire brickwork, the curved, tiled mullions between the ground floor windows - and the overall sense of proportion, the building

compromises the stark modernity with a traditional, sensitive feel.

Strange's diluted form of modernism reflected his former employment with Burnet Tait & Lorne (1925-35), during which time he was exposed to the more tempered ideas of Dudok, Asplund and Aalto rather than those of the pure modernism of Mies van der Rohe or Le Corbusier. The recently completed Hornsey Town Hall (1933-5), built to the Hilvesum-inspired designs of R.H. Uren, provided a more local archetype, and throughout the project the Town Hall Committee made numerous comparative visits to that edifice.

Largely because of a continuation of municipal functions (the building became the council offices for the London Borough of Brent in 1965),Wembley Town Hall preserves much of its original spaces and fixtures and fittings. The council chamber survives relatively unaltered, although the horseshoe-plan seating was replaced in *c.*1987, in part seemingly by late19th-century seating cannibalised from the long obsolete Willesden Town Hall. The spacious assembly hall saw the introduction of acoustic panels in the 1960s or 70s, and more recently (*c.*1998), the insertion of a new suspended wooden floor. Other recent changes include the creation of a canteen area beside the assembly hall, called 'The Palm Room'.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Derek Kendall, January 1991

NOTES

1. *The Builder*, 24 May 1939, 959.

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GREATER LONDON

NBR INDEX NO: 95814

BROMLEY

NGR: TQ 3450 6980

ANERLEY ROAD

ANERLEY TOWN HALL (FORMERLY PENGE VESTRY HALL)

This Italianate style building of 1876-79 was built for Penge Vestry to the designs of George Elkington, the second of three such buildings to his name in south-east London. Built on land purchased from the North Surrey District Schools, the building was originally to have been in Kentish ragstone, but was actually built in stocks faced with white gault bricks and stone dressings- presumably for reasons of economy. The Bath stone detailing - including the pointed drip-moulds and modillion eaves cornice - and polygonal, copper-clad, clock-tower enliven the otherwise plain exterior, impart an almost ecclesiastical air to the building.

Penge Vestry Hall's modest exterior treatment was matched by its straightforwardness in plan. On the ground floor, the vestry hall was set to the side of the offices and waiting room at the front of the building. The hall, 57ft by 27ft and capable of seating 300 persons, was reached internally from the offices, and externally, by the public, from the street. Constructionally this hall is of interest for its pseudo hammer-beam roof, the beams tied by wrought-iron rods. This, and other details, give it the characteristics more of a village hall than an urban council building. The permanent dais or platform at the south end was originally movable, reflecting the multi-purpose use of the space: in this instance for both public and vestry meetings. The first floor housed two offices, and a committee room composed of both inner room and anteroom.

The building was enlarged in 1911 and in 1923-5 a library and magistrates court were added, all in matching style. The latter additions were built to the joint designs of Fred W. Ruck and H.W. Longdin, as commemorated on the foundation stone. The buildings overall remain well preserved and are currently occupied by Bromley Social Services and Housing.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photographed by Sid Barker
Recorded 27th January 1999

SOURCES

The Builder, 5 August 1876, 756; 3 May 1879, 496.

GREATER LONDON BUILDINGS INDEX NO:95897

BROMLEY NGR: TQ 3739 6965

HIGH STREET, BECKENHAM/CHURCH AVENUE

BECKENHAM TOWN HALL (DEMOLISHED)

Beckenham Town Hall was a neo-Georgian building erected in 1932 for Beckenham Urban District Council. Its design was the result of a competition held in 1927, assessed by Septimus Warwick, that was won by Lanchester, Lucas and Lodge (later Lanchester and Lodge). Built with only minor alterations, the building comprised three interconnecting blocks with separate entrances, an arrangement dictated by the awkwardly shaped site. The principal block was of brick with Portland stone dressings, its façade dominated by a 100ft high central tower that was described in *The Builder* the following terms; 'Its feet are firmly planted on the ground, from whence it rises visibly and boldly through the two stories of the Town Hall, hesitates a little at the roof line, and continues dramatically upwards to a crown of bejewelled neo-Grec, out of reach of the rising tide of simplicity'. The other blocks accommodated a health clinic and a electricity department respectively. The entire building was demolished in the 1990s.

The design of Beckenham Town Hall followed the usual preferences of interwar civic architecture - formal planning and a simplified classical style. The principal block had a courtyard plan, thereby allowing for the council chamber to be placed in the centre away from street noise. A ceremonial route was provided, comprising an entrance hall that led to a grand stair and thence to the council chamber. Architectural effort was inevitably concentrated in these formal spaces. The council chamber had Ionic fluted columns and apsidal niches, whilst the committee rooms were finished in a more domestic 'Adamesque' manner. One noteworthy feature was the collegiate seating arrangement (that is opposing benches) in the council chamber, in imitation of the Houses of Parliament. Beckenham was unusual in opting for this arrangement, most councils preferring the more usual semi-circular layout.

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON NMR NO: 95813

BROMLEY NGR: TQ 4070 6909

ROCHESTER AVENUE/KENTISH WAY

BROMLEY CIVIC CENTRE (FORMERLY STOCKWELL COLLEGE)

At the heart of this spatially, temporally and functionally complex group of buildings is the late-18th-century palace of the Bishops of Rochester. This handsome red-brick block remained in ecclesiastical ownership until it was sold in 1845 to Mr Coles Child. The building remained in his family's ownership until the early 20th century, undergoing significant alterations during the later part of the 19th century. It passed into institutional use, during which time the building was extensively enlarged, including the addition of wings in 1934-5 by R H Turner. This work was carried out prior to the arrival of Stockwell College (a teachers' training college) on the site, but after Kent County Council took over the running of the college in 1960. Further substantial additions followed later that decade, done under E.T. Ashley-Smith, Kent County Architect. The college closed in 1980 and the London Borough of Bromley took over the complex two years later, at which time it became the civic centre. Further additions followed, including the almost free-standing council chamber, designed in house by the council's own architects' department, opened in 1986. The former palace now houses the ceremonial spaces, the mayor's parlour and reception rooms, while the various departmental offices are spread around the former college buildings including two former residential blocks - the whole ensemble being set within a mature and well-maintained landscape garden.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 25th January 1999

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95829**

BROMLEY **NGR: TQ 402 693**

MARKET SQUARE

BROMLEY TOWN HALL (DEMOLISHED)

Bromley's first town hall was a privately financed building, paid for by the Lord of the Manor Mr Coles Child (whose residence, the former Bishops Palace, became Bromley Civic Centre in 1982). The architect T.C. Sorbery or Sorby was appointed following a limited competition in 1863, but his contribution was limited to the Gothic-style elevations, as the plans had already been decided upon. The building cost £10,000 and included a police station, branch bank, literary institute, and public hall, seating 300. However, the offices of the local authority, Bromley Local Board and its successor Bromley Urban District Council (formed 1894), were based elsewhere, at 19 East Street and, from 1906, at the new town hall on Tweedy Road. Coles Child's building does not survive, demolished in the 1930s.

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON NBR NO: 92371

BROMLEY NGR: TQ 4046 6947

WIDMORE ROAD/TWEEDY ROAD

BROMLEY TOWN HALL

Bromley Town Hall is a building of two parts. The earliest section, facing onto Tweedy Road, was built in 1906-7; the second part, fronting Widmore Road, is an addition of 1938-9. In 1904 Bromley Municipal Council held a competition for new council offices, a courthouse and departmental offices, to cost no more that £20,000, to be built on a site bounded by three existing streets. The professional assessor J.S.Gibson awarded the first premium to the 'simple, straightforward plan' of R. Frank Atkinson.[1] His design had three interlinking blocks, each facing onto one of the roads, with the municipal functions to the front on Tweedy Road and the courts to the rear joined by a wing housing the education offices. The ensemble was designed in the 'Wrennaissance' style then much in fashion for public buildings, which the architect described as having 'a simple yet dignified character, in keeping with the quaint surroundings of Bromley'.[2] This design was built with only minor modifications in 1906-7.[3]

The main block on Tweedy Road is a long two-storey building of red brick with stone embellishments and a hipped slate roof. The centre and end bays are stepped forward, with a semi-circular entrance porch, an open pediment and a cupola, forming the middle section. These elements, like the window architraves, quoins and cornice are detailed in stone dressings of typical Edwardian weightiness. The planning is formal and hierarchical, reflecting the preoccupations of the day, with a 'processional route' made up of a centrally placed entrance vestibule and principal stair leading to the first floor council chamber, placed at the rear to be away from the noises of the street. Architectural display is concentrated in these spaces, with screen of Ionic columns at both levels, and a weighty imperial stair with chunky urn balusters and broad handrails, all of stone. The various departmental offices were placed on the ground floor, off a broad, vaulted, cross-axial corridor, with the civic spaces - the mayor's parlour, committee rooms and councillors' robing room - concentrated on the first floor. These spaces have suffered the loss of their original fittings (the building is no longer in council use).

At the time of the original competition the council had understood that the building might need to be enlarged and Atkinson's design had allowed space for a possible extension. However, by the 1930s it was not enlargement that was being contemplated but replacement. In 1938 Charles Cowles Voysey devised a scheme - a U-shaped complex with a large forecourt, occupying the site of Atkinson's municipal offices, and a substantial assembly hall to Widmore Road.[4] In the event the council limited themselves to building an extension, perhaps influenced by the impending war, constructed in 1938-9. This two-storey addition was designed by Voysey, assisted by John Brandon Jones and Robert (or John) Ashton, to follow the lines of the original building, respecting its materials, cornice line and high pitched roof, and employing a sympathetic neo-Georgian idiom for its exteriors. Behind the brick and stone exterior is a reinforced-concrete frame, this method of construction having been apparently borne out of

financial necessity as the impending war had driven up steel prices. The layout of the building is traditional, echoing the formality of its predecessor, with an entrance hall and grand top-lit imperial stair leading to the council chamber, on a mezzanine level at the rear of the building. The airy stair hall is dominated by four fluted columns clad in green marble, whilst the concrete stair has an elegant scrolled metal balustrade. The more important rooms were finished with wooden panelling and gas fire surrounds. Sadly the second council chamber, like its predecessor on Tweedy Road, has now lost it original seating. This was the consequence of a decision by the London Borough of Bromley in the 1980s to relocate their civic centre into the former Bishops Palace off Rochester Avenue.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 25th January 1999

NOTES

[1] *The Builder*, Dec 24 1904 p657

[2] *The Builder* Jan 14 1905.

[3] For example, the dormer windows shown in a published elevation were omitted. See *The Builder*, Jan 14 1905.

[4] *The Builder* May 13 1938 p948.

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95815**

CAMDEN **NGR: TQ 3014 8280**

EUSTON ROAD/ JUDD STREET

CAMDEN TOWN HALL (FORMERLY ST PANCRAS TOWN HALL)

This neo-classical edifice, built for St Pancras Borough Council in 1935-7 to a design by Albert J. Thomas, is probably the most traditionally styled of all the town halls erected in London in that decade. It has a steel-frame, clad on all sides in Portland stone, with a long elevation to Euston Road, although the main entrance is on the return elevation on Judd Street. The exterior has a channelled ground floor, with a central section given emphasis by giant Corinthian order columns rising to full pediments and a raised attic storey with pitched roofs; the doorways ornamented by finely carved keystones, the work of W.C.H. King. The planning - a formal courtyard type layout with a clear hierarchy of spaces, the most important rooms grouped together on the *piano nobile* - follows the precepts of the age. One aspect of this being a concern with circulation between the different parts of the building. The principal spaces, which are fitted out in an appropriately grand manner with high quality materials, survive in good order. The only significant addition being a controversial eight-storey office extension, added in 1973-7, with a corrugated exterior of curved precast concrete panels, by Camden's Architects Department.

Prior to the construction of the town hall the work of the successive local authorities in St Pancras had been carried out from the purpose-built vestry offices on Pancras Road (now St Pancras Way), put up 1846 and extensively remodelled in 1874-5.[1] There were moves to have this building replaced in the 1890s, even before the formation of the Metropolitan Borough of St Pancras in 1900, following which the already inadequate facilities had to be further stretched to accommodate a increased administrative burden. Following the acquisition of a suitable site on Euston Road the architect Albert J. Thomas was appointed in 1934 to design a new town hall, containing the council offices, a council chamber and a public assembly hall for 1000 people. Thomas had prior connections with St Pancras Borough Council, having designed the first of several housing schemes for them in 1924. He also held the post of office manager for Sir Edwin Lutyens when he began work on the St Pancras designs, leaving to set up on his own in 1935.[2] Thomas' association with Lutyens is a clear influence on the dignified classical style that characterises the building at Euston, although the giant Corinthian order that distinguishes its exterior and the formal courtyard plan also recall Sir Edwin Cooper's Marylebone Town Hall (1914-20).

Construction of the building in 1935-7 was carried out by Dove Brothers of Islington with steelwork by Redpath, Brown and Co., Ltd. The long rectangular building is formed of two unequalled sized parts. To the east is a public assembly hall with its entrance on its south side fronting Bidborough Street, and to the west the offices and council chamber, aligned on an east-west axis with the main entrance on Judd Street. This arrangement allowed the council chamber to be cocooned near the centre of the building, away from the street noises, with a marble-clad imperial stair acting as a suitably dignified approach. The ranges fronting onto the street were

occupied by offices on the ground and second floors, and by the other elements of the civic suite, the committee rooms, mayor's parlour and the member's rooms, on the first floor. A continuous corridor, served by two secondary staircases, was provided at each level to facilitate circulation. Such formal planning was still much in favour in the inter war years, but its inflexibility sometimes necessitated compromises such as the extremely cramped stairs serving the twin public galleries in the council chamber. The generously proportioned basement was originally built to house the electricity department and included a sub station, a showroom and a demonstration kitchen; St Pancras had been one of the first authorities to supply its own electricity and this service was given due prominence in the design of the building

The interior is still distinguished by a series of handsomely finished spaces. The entrance hall has a fine patterned floor in black and white marble, containing the grand stair clad in white marble with polished Corinthian columns in darker marble at the upper level, lit at the sides and to the top. The barrel-vaulted top-lit council chamber has oak panelling, detailed with Corinthian pilasters, and retains its original horseshoe-plan fixed seating and mayoral dais, set back in a recess that originally opened onto a side gallery in the assembly hall beyond. The other principal rooms on the first-floor are also panelled, that in the mayor's parlour being full height, as is the spacious corridor that joins them, which has plaster vaults[3] and stylish globular lights. That section of the corridor adjoining the mayor's parlour has acquired an additional purpose during the 1990s when a disparate group of memorials were sited here, commemorating historical events such as the Holocaust and the Irish famine as well miliatary bodies such as the International Brigade and the Canadian Air Force. Amongst the civic objects on display in the mayor's parlour are the maces of the three metropolitan boroughs - St Pancras[4], Holborn and Hampstead – amalgamated in 1965 to form the London Borough of Camden. This enduring civic pride is also evidenced by the collection of portrait busts spread around the building, including that of the onetime St Pancras vestryman George Bernard Shaw in the mayor's parlour, the architect Albert Thomas in the members' room and the former St Pancras councillor Krishna Menon in the council chamber vestibule.

The 1965 local government reforms have had only a limited impact on the town hall, which was chosen as the main administrative centre of the new authority.[5] Apart from the inevitable modernisation and reordering of the office accommodation, the most notable alteration to the building has perhaps been a conservatory style extension to the second floor for a staff canteen. Instead the need for additional office space was answered by an eight-storey detached extension, built in 1973-7, linked to the existing town hall by a bridge at the third floor level. When first announced this addition provoked protests from the council workers, who had not been consulted during the planning stages and who were unhappy with its open-plan arrangement.[6] This contrasts with the experience of some of the other boroughs, most notably Hounslow and Hillingdon, where staff were consulted before the new council offices were built, and open-plan offices were the preferred choice.[7]

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 13th July 1998

NOTES

[1] see NBR file no: 95899.

[2] It has been claimed that he was sacked by Lutyens for doing his own work in office time, a charge disputed by Thomas' son in law, G. Drewett, see *RIBA Journal*, Feb 1982 p9. He went onto design the Institut Francaise, with M. Bonnet, in Kensington (opened 1939) for which he was made Chevalier de la Legion d/Honneur and an Officier d'Acadamie Francaise.

[3] Like those of County Hall, also used by Monson at Islington Town Hall.

[4] St Pancras is reputedly one of the larger metropolitan authority maces.

[5] Its equivalents, Hampstead and Holborn Town Halls, lost out, and were at one time threatened with demolition

[6] NALGO dubbed the extension 'Nelly, the white elephant'.

[7] See NBR files no: 95842 (Hounslow Civic Centre) and 95840 (Hillingdon Civic Centre).

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 91650**

CAMDEN **NGR: TQ 2677 8417**

AVENUE ROAD

HAMPSTEAD CIVIC CENTRE (UNEXECUTED)

The Metropolitan Borough of Camden had long wished to replace its inconveniently located, out-moded Victorian town hall on Haverstock Hill when it settled on a bomb damage site off Avenue Road at Swiss Cottage in the 1940s. This location, considered 'the gateway to North West London' by the council, was purchased in 1956 and two years later Sir Basil Spence was appointed to design an ambitious new municipal complex here. Spence's intention was to 'take some of the starch out of Town Halls', so he designed an informal grouping of detached blocks, of mixed heights and a varied silhouette.[i] This reflected a new approach to local government architecture, that emphasised openness and approachability, rejected formal heirarchical planning, and opted for Modernism over more traditional styles. At Swiss Cottage, Spence distributed the different elements – including an assembly hall, swimming baths, gymnasium and library – around the site with a focus provided by a landmark tower block, housing the council offices, at the north west corner. The civic suite and council chamber were placed in the podium of the tower. The strong geometric shapes thus created were counterbalanced by the detailing of the walls, delicate vertical slats or fins to the tower and assembly hall blocks. However, the design process was overtaken by local government reforms, and only a much-reduced scheme, comprising a library and sports centre, was built in 1963-4.

Report by Joanna Smith

NOTES

[i] *The Builder,* 30 Jan 1959.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95816

CAMDEN NGR NO: TQ 2723 8517

HAVERSTOCK HILL

HAMPSTEAD TOWN HALL

Like many of the parish vestries in London reformed by the 1855 Metropolitan Management Act Hampstead Vestry did not initially opt for purpose-built accommodation, preferring to continue meeting in the boardroom of the local workhouse. It was apparently the doubling of the number of vestrymen to 60 in 1873 that made the provision of larger premises a necessity.[1] The choice of a location on the corner of Haverstock Hill and Belsize Avenue was a compromise, being at some distance from the historical and commercial centre of the district, and one that did not pass without adverse comment at the time. Fifteen architects were invited to submit designs in 1876 for a building 'to include a room for the vestrymen to meet in, a public hall capable of seating 800 persons, surveyor's and vestry clerk's and other offices', to cost no more than £10,000.[2] Seven architects submitted designs and, after the usual degree of wrangling (few such competitions escaped without accusations of jobbery and abuse), the winners were revealed as H. E. Kendall and Frederick Mew.[3] Their design was generally well received, the *Building News* thought the plan well considered and the treatment of the exterior 'a free common sense style of Classic, suitable for the official departments of a parish vestry'.[4] Construction of the building by William Shepherd of Bermondsey was apparently complete by June 1878, having cost £18,500 in total including the land. Unusually, there appears to have been no kind of ceremony to mark the official opening of the building.

London's vestry halls, which began to appear in greater numbers from the 1860s, were modest structures by the standards of the civic architecture of the provinces; most were simple two-storey, centrally-planned rectangular buildings. The architectural style most favoured was the classically derived, freely interpreted style now known as the Italianate. Hampstead Vestry Hall lies firmly within this tradition. The building's exterior has a symmetrical front façade, of red brick with stone dressings, with a rusticated ground floor and central pediment. This arrangement is repeated on both return elevations. Flanking the main entrance are sash windows with oculi above, each paired together by a stone architrave in an unusual keyhole-shaped arrangement. Occupying the centre bays on the first floor are three large round-headed windows, revealing the location of the public hall behind. The words 'Town Hall' are inscribed in a stone frieze on the façade, those on the return evlevations bearing the legend 'Erected AD 1877'.[5]

The original layout of the vestry hall had kitchens, muniment and store rooms and a residence for the hall-keeper in the basement with the ground floor given over to offices, the entrance hall and principal stair, and at the front left, a 'large hall for the meetings of the vestrymen' . The first floor was largely taken up by the public hall, 61ft by 41ft, and its service rooms, cloakrooms etc., as well as a secondary stair and a large committee room to the rear. Much of this layout survives, with many rooms retaining at least some of their original detailing. The architectural effort was principally limited to the entrance hall, the main stair and the public hall, forming a still impressive ensemble. The broad entrance passage and the spacious and airy top-lit stair hall are

enlivened by coloured floor tiles while the grand imperial stair, with stone treads and elaborate cast-iron balusters, is given the unusual adornment of a large round-headed mirror set in an ornate carved stone surround incorporating a clock, placed on the half landing. The public hall, which retains its heavy cornice with console brackets and a patterned frieze, is a relatively modest space by the standards of the vestry halls in east London – it lacks a public gallery - but was presumably considered adequate for the local needs. The hall was given fireproof flooring, using Dennett's system (one of the patented technologies of the day), of iron girders and brick jack arching. Unusually, the arching was left visible in the vestry room below, given greater respectability by the application of classical ornament.

The first significant alterations to the building were made in 1885-6 by Frederick Mew. The principal change being the enlargement of the committee room, achieved by taking over an adjoining waiting room, and a modest rear extension. Apart from a new stair tower (opening onto Belsize Avenue) the extension was only at the first-floor level, supported on cast-iron columns. The toilet accommodation was also increased, necessitating a small side extension to the ground floor. During the remaining years of the 19th century some small-scale piecemeal alterations were carried out, many at the request of the London County Council to ensure that the public hall and the committee room retained their licences as places of public entertainment. These works were largely concerned with the access to and exits from the licensed areas, and the additions of uprights to the balustrade on the upper landing presumably date from this time.

By the end of the 19th century the administrative work of the vestry had expanded well beyond that of its mid-century inception, as had the services it now provided to its local community, including public libraries, baths and the supply of electricity. This put the office accommodation in the vestry hall under strain. New demands were placed on the building by local government reforms in 1900, which swept away the vestries and created the metropolitan boroughs in their place, as vestry boardrooms were transformed into council chambers, and mayors parlours made their first appearance. The result was a spate of municipal building activity across London, with some authorities opting to build new town halls and others electing to enlarge their existing buildings. Hampstead Borough Council considered both options and eventually decided upon the latter. In 1910-11 a substantial extension was built, fronting on Belsize Avenue, designed by John Murray. This two-storey building, of red brick with stone dressings, was designed in the Baroque Revival style then in favour for public buildings.[6] Consisting primarily of offices, the most important finished in half-height wood panelling, the extension also contained a new stair to replace Mews 1885-6 stair tower (demolished to make way for the extension) and a hall keepers flat in the attic.

By the 1930s the council were again contemplating major works including a scheme to demolish the front part of the building for use as offices and to erect an new assembly hall on another site, going so far as to engage the architectural firm Slater, Moberly and Uren. These proposals were not pursued after the war, instead an altogether more ambitious approach was adopted culminating in the appointment of Sir Basil Spence in 1958 to design a new civic complex at Swiss Cottage.[7] Unfortunately, the only part of the proposals to be realised was the library and sports centre. During this period some minor alterations to Hampstead Town Hall were undertaken, such as the new public staircase at the north end of the public hall, for which an application was made in 1949.[8] Following the creation of the London Borough of Camden in 1965, formed from the Metropolitan Boroughs of Hampstead, St Pancras and Holborn, the future

of the Hampstead building became even more uncertain – marked down at one time for demolition following the decision to centralise the new authority's offices at its Euston site. The loss of some original fittings, most notably the seating in the former council chamber, inevitably followed although features such as the group of war memorials in the stair hall have survived. After a long period of uncertainty it was finally agreed to convert the building to an arts centre, to the designs of Burrell, Foley & Fisher.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photographs by Sid Barker
Recorded 10th July 1998

NOTES

[1] Thompson, *Hampstead Building a Borough, 1650-1964*, 1974 p407.

[2] This was considered sufficient for a public building of some dignity, which it was hoped would be partially maintained by the money raised from the hire of the hall. *The Builder*, Apr 15 1876,367.

[3] Kendall went on to become the Surveyor to Hampstead Vestry.

[4] *The Building News*, Apr 7 1876,337.

[5] Vestry Hall and Town Hall were often used interchangeably at this date although the front inscription may originally have been 'Vestry Hall' (shown in an illustration in the *Building News*, Nov 15 1878) and changed to Town Hall after 1900.

[6] Murray was the architect to the Office of Woods, Forests and Land Revenues and designed their new offices on Whitehall built 1909-10.

[7] See Buildings Index file 96150.

[8] See LMA file GLC/AR/BR/07/7553.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95898

CAMDEN NGR: TQ 3102 8197

CLERKENWELL ROAD/GRAY'S INN ROAD

HOLBORN TOWN HALL (DEMOLISHED)

Holborn Town Hall was a substantial brick-and-stone pile with frontages on both Clerkenwell Road and Grays Inn Road. It was built in 1878-9 to the designs of Lewis Isaacs, surveyor to Holborn Board of Works (for whom the building was erected), and his partner Henry Louis Florence. The general contractors were Messrs Brown & Robinson of Finsbury and the building's total cost, including the site, was £50,000. Its siting was opportunistic, exploiting the road improvement scheme then under construction; the foundation stone of the town hall being laid by the Chairman of the Metropolitan Board of Works, Sir James McGarel Hogg, on the same day that he opened the last section of the newly made Clerkenwell Road. The building was designed in the then fashionable Italianate-cum-French Renaissance manner, but its period of civic use was short, as it was sold in 1906 by the successor to the Holborn Board, Holborn Metropolitan Borough Conncil.

The L-shaped building had two three-storey gabled ranges, separately housing the offices and public hall, joined by a 120ft-tall corner clock tower surmounted by a cupola. Such a dominating tower was unusual for a London municipal building of this date but the building's site was a commanding one, at the junction of three widened thoroughfares, and Holborn Board grasped the opportunity for civic display. Behind lay a stoneyard and a single-storey range post-mortem room and mortuary. The town hall was built of red Fareham brick with Portland-stone dressings, and polished Aberdeen granite detailing to the window surrounds and main entrance. The Clerkenwell Street elevation was enlivened by oculi with cartouche surrounds, that lit the upper part of the hall, and had a large central carriageway for the stone yard beyond. The main entrance, at the base of the corner tower, had a pedimented doorway. Public access to the offices was via a three-bay loggia on the Grays Inn Road front, originally open but subsequently glazed.

The arrangement of the Clerkenwell Road range boasted the unusual juxtaposition of a grand double-height hall raised over a municipal stone yard. To facilitate this arrangement, the hall was given a floor of brick jack-arching, supported by cast-iron columns, and the rear elevation was left open-sided on the ground floor. Although some other municipal buildings of this date included a stone yard within the complex, most notably the rebuilt Finsbury Vestry Hall of 1894-5, none apparently combined the practical and the polite so closely. The ground floor was later enclosed, perhaps in 1890 when other alterations by Isaacs and Florence were carried out. The galleried public hall, 96ft long, 45ft wide and 32ft high, could accommodate 1200 people and was ornately finished - its decorative scheme included caryatids and panels representing the months of the year adorning the cove of the ceiling. The planning of the Gray's Inn Road range followed a more traditional pattern, with the offices of the board officials on the ground floor, a board room on the first floor with the housekeeper's accommodation above. The principal stair,

adjoining the main circular entrance hall, served both the public hall and the board room. This was originally constructed of stone with balusters and newels of Doulton ware, reputedly the first use of this material for this purpose. The stair was altered at the request of the London County Council in 1890, prior to the granted of a license as a place of public entertainment, when it was partly remade in grey and white marble.

After the creation of Holborn Metropolitan Borough Council in 1900 the building's future came under review. Built for a different era of local government, consideration was at first given to adapting the building, but it seems this could not be done without destroying the letting value of the hall.[1] As a consequence it was decided in 1905 to build new council offices adjoining St Giles Library on High Holborn and to sell Holborn Town Hall, the proceeds of the sale being put towards the costs of the proposed building.[2] After 1906 Holborn Hall, as it then became, passed out of local government use, operating for a time as a concert venue. The building was demolished in the 1960s.

Report by Joanna Smith

NOTES

[1] The income from the hall was considerable, £4356 in 1903-4 . *The Builder* 31 Mar 1906, 356

[2] See buildings report on Holborn Town Hall, NBR Index no: 93635.

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GREATER LONDON

NBR INDEX NO: 93635

CAMDEN

NGR: TQ 3035 8145

HIGH HOLBORN

HOLBORN TOWN HALL AND LIBRARY

(The following is intended as an addendum to the existing Building Report)

By the end of the 19th century St Giles District Board of Works were occupying offices at 197 High Holborn. They also owned some adjoining property, which they sold in 1893 to the Commissioners for St Giles Library. A limited competition was then held, with the requirement that the existing passageway to the board offices and a rear yard be incorporated into the design. The first premium was awarded to Mr W. Rushworth. Construction of the new library commenced in 1893 and was completed the next year. The building cost £6,440 and the contractor was a W. Boyce. In 1900 Holborn Metropolitan Borough Council was formed by the amalgamation of the St. Giles and Holborn District Board of Works. The new authority inherited both the building on High Holborn and Holborn Town Hall on the Grays Inn Road. Although the latter building was the more impressive much of the space was taken up by a large public hall and it proved impossible to adapt the building without destroying the letting value of the hall. Instead it was decided to acquire further land on High Holborn and expand the Library building. Once again a limited competition was held, with the successful design being that of Messrs H. Anselm Hall and Septimus Warwick. Building began in 1906 and was completed in 1908, the builders being John Greenwood Ltd. Although a relatively costly building, some £50,000 in total, half this expenditure had been on the site and Holborn Borough Council went to some lengths to keep down the costs of the new premises (the borough prided itself on having amongst the lowest rates in the metropolis). For example, the money raised by the sale of the other town hall was put towards the new building. It was also noted that the winning design had recommended itself to the council because it incorporated more of the existing building than any other and thus allowed the existing offices to continue to be used whilst the new structure was under construction (and thereby avoided the cost of temporary premises).

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95899

CAMDEN NGR: TQ 2963 8351

PANCRAS ROAD (NOW ST PANCRAS WAY)

ST PANCRAS VESTRY HALL (DEMOLISHED)

This building was erected in 1846 for the Select Vestry of St Pancras and the Directors of the Poor, on a site adjoining St Pancras Workhouse (of 1809). The modest three-storey structure was designed by Thomas Bird. The ground and first floors contained offices, whilst the second floor was largely taken up by a large (70ft x 38ft) vestry room. A pair of open-well stairs were situated in the front vestibule or hall. Other features included a strong room on the first floor, an innovation also making its first appearance in commercial banks at this time. In 1874-5 the building was remodelled and extended as a consequence of the increased business of the vestry, which then administered a large and populous parish of over 250,000 inhabitants. The architect of these works was H H Bridgman, the winner of a competition held in 1874, who also went on to design a replacement workhouse for the St Pancras Guardians in 1881 that was only partly realised. His design for the vestry hall comprised a new front block in the Italianate style. This had a façade of red brick with stone dressings, with a ground floor faced in Corsham stone with polished grey granite columns flanking the entrance, and finished with a balustraded parapet ornamented with a clock. Much of the original layout seems to have been retained, including the second-floor vestry room (later the council chamber), familiar to George Bernard Shaw, who served as both a vestryman and a councillor in this building between 1900-3. A competition for a replacement vestry hall on another site was held in 1892-3, won by William Harrison, but came to nothing. The building was eventually superseded by the town hall on Euston Road, opened in 1937, and has been demolished.

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95818

CROYDON NGR:TQ 323 655

HIGH STREET

CROYDON TOWN HALL (DEMOLISHED)

This building was put up in 1808-9, replacing a earlier structure on the same site on the west side of the High Street (erected in 1566 as a Market House and subsequently used as the town hall). The second town hall was built in an austere classical style, faced in stone from a local quarry at Mersham. Its design has been attributed to John Staff (see Clare Graham, Law Courts). The construction of its replacement, the grand civic complex on Katherine Street, had already commenced when the town hall was demolished in 1893 as part of a road widening scheme.

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON NBR NO: 95817

CROYDON NGR NO: 3243 6538

KATHERINE STREET/FELL STREET

CROYDON TOWN HALL & TABERNER HOUSE

This ambitious grouping of municipal buildings, comprising municipal offices, courts, a library, and a slightly later cornmarket, was erected for Croydon Corporation between 1892 and 1896 as a declaration of civic maturity. The only unified complex of comparable grandeur in the Greater London area is at East Ham. In recognising the ambition and overt civic pride that marks these complexes out from the general run of late 19th century local government buildings in the capital it is worth noting that both Croydon and East Ham were outside of the County of London at this date. Their inspiration was the grand mid-to-late 19th century town halls of the Midland and Northern cities, with their landmark clock towers, eclectic architectural styling and didactic schemes of decoration. Such a developed degree of civic consciousness was partly related to administrative status, Croydon, East Ham and West Ham were the only three areas of metropolitan London to achieve incorporation as county boroughs, granting them equivalent powers to a county authority.

The site of the buildings had previously been occupied by the central railway station, which was relocated elsewhere in 1889. This coincided with a scheme of road improvements in central Croydon that had necessitated the demolition of the old town hall, built in 1808 on the High Street. A local architect, Charles Henman Jr, was appointed to design the new civic buildings and he adopted an eclectic, predominantly Tudor, style. Construction of the red-brick and Portland-stone buildings was commenced in 1892, undertaken by Messrs. W.H. Lascelles & Co., and completed in 1895. The total costs were in the region of £70,000. The various functional elements of the site were kept distinct but loosely combined together in blocks of contrasting size. The offices, library, Braithwaite Hall and the corn exchange were ranged along Katherine Street whilst the courts to the south faced onto Fell Street. Surplus land on the western edge of the site was laid out at the same time as a public garden. The highly decorated façades of the town hall were adorned with sculptural decoration exhorting both civic and personal virtues. This level of finish was matched internally by a sumptuous marble entrance hall, a grand Imperial stair and a suite of reception rooms. The history of the building and its decoration were fully detailed in a handsome souvenir brochure published to commemorate the opening of the offices by the Prince of Wales in 1896.

By the 1920s central Croydon was becoming badly congested and a new scheme of improvements was proposed. Following the purchase of land around Park Lane (to the west of the town hall gardens) a competition was held in 1935 for a new civic centre, won by F.W. Halfhide and R.J. O'Donoghue. The brief included an extension to the retained Victorian building as well as a new technical institute, art school and assembly hall. But instead, Robert Atkinson was appointed. He only managed to complete an electricity showroom and offices on Wellesley Road in 1937 before the outbreak of war. Despite this setback Croydon council continued to pursue its ambitions to replan the town centre, appointing a reconstruction committee as early as 1943 – whose remit now included the town hall itself after it had sustained serious bomb damage in 1940. The result was the bold plan unveiled in 1945, the progenitor of

Croydon's sweeping post-war redevelopment.

During the 1950s and 1960s the civic ambitions of the interwar years were gradually accomplished. Robert Atkinson and Partners started with a technical college, progressing to the Fairfield Halls, the law courts and a college of art. In addition to this Croydon provided itself with new council offices, built between 1962-8, consisting primarily of a 16-storey splayed-oblong tower block on a three-storey podium. This reinforced-concrete structure, named Taberner House after a former town clerk, was designed in-house, and has been attributed to H Thornley, principal borough architect under the borough engineer A F Holt from 1965-7. Adjoining this are two lower office blocks, one linked by a bridge to Taberner House, the other linked to the Victorian town hall. The future of the latter building was, for a time, uncertain and proposals for its complete redevelopment were considered. However, from 1985 Tibbalds Munro masterminded a reworking and partial rebuilding of the complex, including the conversion of the former courts into galleries and exhibition spaces, the creation of a cinema in the old library space and the construction of a brand new public library to the rear. The council offices have undergone a painstaking refurbishment, returning the most important spaces to their full Victorian splendour. This culminated in the reoccupation of the Ionic-pilastered council chamber although as a concession to modern times the chamber has been provided with rearrangeable rather than fixed furniture.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 4th September 1998

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GREATER LONDON NBR NO: 95819

CROYDON NGR: TQ 307 608

BRIGHTON ROAD

PURLEY COUNCIL OFFICES
(FORMERLY COULSDON AND PURLEY COUNCIL OFFICES)

These modest council offices of 1928-30, built for Coulsdon and Purley Urban District Council, are in the domestic neo-Georgian style that was *de rigueur* for suburban London's municipal buildings in the interwar years. Its design was the result of an architectural competition held in 1926, the brief being for offices (capable of future expansion), a fire station and firemen's quarters. The winning entry, by W.B. Nicolls & Basil Hughes, comprised a courtyard building - a two-storey front block with one-storey ranges around a garden area - with ample space behind for future additions. The fire station and its staff accommodation were placed to the side. These buildings were constructed as designed for the relatively modest sum of £26,000.

The building has a red brick exterior with stone dressings, that are concentrated in the centre bays which have an ionic pillared portico rising to a deep cornice and pediment. Above is a hipped tiled roof. The building's domestic character is further emphasised by the wooden shutters that flank the sash windows. The neatly arranged plan allowed for a generously sized entrance hall on the ground floor with, on the floor above, a crush hall that doubled as a vestibule for the adjoining council chamber. Such spatial adaptability extended to the committee rooms flanking the council chamber, provided with retractable partition walls to allow for the whole suite to be thrown open into a single space. These areas were given an appropriate level of finish for their status - the shallow-arched council chamber was wainscotted throughout and the entrance and crush hall were both floored with marble tiles. Fortunately much of the interior survives in good condition, the most significant loss being the seating in the council chamber, which was surplus to requirements after Coulsdon and Purley merged with Croydon in 1965 to form the London Borough of Croydon. Sympathetically extended to the rear, Purley Council Offices still retains much of its original unaffected suburban charm.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photographs by Sid Barker
Recorded 4th September 1998

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Academy Architecture and Architectural Review, vol 61, 1929.

GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 98878

EALING NGR: TQ 1985 8024

HIGH STREET

ACTON LOCAL BOARD OFFICES (DEMOLISHED)

These Italianate-Gothic-style offices were built in 1870-1 to the designs of a local architect, Edward Monson, for Acton Local Board. The two-storey edifice (with a basement) was built of stock brick with cement dressings and had stone columns embellishing its the front entrance. At the rear of the building was an engine house and a 'fire-escape house',[1] in addition to which it had a cart shed and tool house in the basement, all provided with separate rear access. On the ground and first floors, the building's layout followed a more usual pattern, with offices on the lower storey and a committee room and board room on the first floor. When first built it was hoped that the 'building will be found useful for other purposes besides those strictly official'.[2] After new municipal offices on Winchester Street were opened in 1910 the building was in commercial use until its demolition in the early 1930s as part of a road improvement scheme.

Report by Joanna Smith

NOTES

[1] This structure was described as being 'sufficiently commodious to admit of drill for the men in wet weather' in *The Builder*, 19 April 1873, 306.

[2] Ibid.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95823

EALING NGR: TQ 2040 8010

HIGH STREET

ACTON TOWN HALL

In 1903 Acton Urban District Council, seeking 'a Town Hall worthy of the place' held a competition for the design of new Public Office and Town Hall. This would supersede the Italianate Gothic styled office (1870) in the High Street which had served the local board, but which was proving increasingly inadequate for the District Council, created under the Local Government Act of 1894. The council took the somewhat unusual step of incorporating various desiderata relating to the interior planning of the buildings: foremost, these included placing the town hall on the first floor, the public rooms (used for dances, dinners etc) on the ground floor, and the council chamber and committee rooms at the rear. Seven architects were selected from a large number of applicants by the council's appointed assessor, J Macvicar Anderson, but his first choice of premiated design was not endorsed by *The Builder* who were called in to inspect the submissions. The magazine was emphatic in its criticism of W.G. Hunt's design, stating

> The first impression - the ultimate general effect - is at once unfavourable, for judging by the perspective view (prepared since the publication of the award) a most unsatisfactory grouping of buildings has resulted. The principal note in the design is a large dome, which rises from a mysterious position, in irritable juxtaposition to the large gable of the Town Hall . . . In detail, the architecture is commonplace, and is indeed, a mere accumulation of features popular with architects a generation ago....Carved and moulded enrichments are employed to such an extent that clause 10 of the conditions , 'the lavish use of ornament is to be avoided and a dignified architectural treatment is desired,' seems to have been entirely overlooked...But the planning is even less successful, and we are at greater loss to discover the preferential factors in the scheme under notice.[1]

Hunt's design, which was subsequently deemed impossibly expensive by a vociferous local ratepayers' association and a council newly elected in March 1907, was never built. In the ensuing litigation between Hunt and the Council - Hunt claiming unpaid fees for preparing drawings etc, the council repudiating their liability on the grounds that there was no contract under seal - it emerged that the son of the former chairman of the council was articled to Hunt. A second competition was opened in 1908, stipulating a maximum cost of £18,000 (Hunt's original proposal attracted a lowest tender of £80,900) with Norman Shaw invited to act as assessor. Forty sets of drawings were submitted, and the Council accepted the second premiated design, that of Messrs. Raffles & Gridley. The builders were F.G. Minter of Putney, who submitted the lowest tender (£15,608). The foundation stone was laid on the 3rd April 1909 by E Monson, Chairman of the council, and the opening ceremony took place on 10 March 1910. The new buildings were built on land (formerly the grounds of Berrymede Priory) which the council had purchased some years earlier, and on which the council had

already erected Public Baths, a Police Court, and a Public Library between 1900 and 1903. The completion of the new town hall brought 'together under one roof the Clerks', Surveyor's, Accountant's, Public Health, and Education Departments, which were previously scattered in different parts of the town'.[2] The total building cost amounted to £17,193.

Raffles & Gridley's Public Office and Town Hall was, by financial necessity, fairly modest in scale. But in appearance this palazzo-style edifice provides a fitting statement of civic pride: the five bay frontage to Winchester Street vaunting projecting end pavilions, pedimented windows and a highly decorative cornice. It was executed in locally made red bricks with Portland stone dressings and green Westmorland slates. In interior layout it was straightforward and logical: a U-shaped plan with a central corridor opening onto two subsidiary corridors in either wing, facilitating circulation between the various offices on the ground floor, and a principal, central, staircase leading to the council chamber, committee room, councillors' retiring room etc on the first floor. The second floor housed further offices, a staff club room and a suite of rooms for the caretaker. The 60ft by 42ft council chamber, disclosed externally by a Venetian window to the Salisbury Street façade, was fairly elaborately adorned, with a coved plaster ceiling (executed by Gilbert Searle of Camberwell) supported by parian pilasters and columns, and a panelled Austrian oak dado running across the walls. All of this survives in what is now open-plan office space, but the stately wood furniture, designed by the architects and executed by J.P. White of Bedford has been removed. Throughout the building, the fixtures and fittings are of high quality, Roman marble being used for the dado of the entrance hall and principal staircase; the doors mostly in oak or mahogany with bronze fittings and the floors and steps in terrazzo and mosaic.

Expansion of office space was anticipated during the construction of Raffles & Gridley's building - the walls of the north block were built to a sufficient thickness to enable an additional storey to be added - but instead this took the form in 1927 of a separate block at the north end of the existing swimming baths, fronting onto the High Street and Acton Lane. Ostensibly an extension to the baths, providing a waiting hall, cloak rooms and lavatories on the ground floor, this irregular, steel-framed building doubled-up for municipal use also, providing an assembly room and adjoining ante room on the first floor and offices on the second floor. Designed by W. Leicester under direction of the Borough Engineer, W.G. Cross, it is fairly unmemorable but nevertheless utilises good quality materials inside, including Oregon pine wall panelling and marble terrazzo for the main staircase and floor of the waiting hall.

In 1939 a new town hall for the Borough of Acton was built to provide further office space and committee rooms, and a more spacious assembly room/concert hall. W.G. Cross, the executant architect (assisted by W. Leicester and Robert Atkinson) succeeded admirably in harmonising the new with the old, both in style, materials and section - the corridors of the old building were extended on the same line and level into those of the new. Its external treatment is a stripped-down rendition of the abutting 1909-10 building using the same materials - red brick and Portland stone - while the interior maintains the same tradition of high quality materials: travertine marble, empire timber, brown sycamore, Indian Greywood and Teak. These finishes are variously used to showy effect throughout the principal visual spaces. Only in the chunky clock tower - a characteristic exterior marker of thirties London town halls - does this building proclaim its autonomy or possibly hegemony vis-à-vis the

earlier buildings. The assembly hall, reached via the main staircase, is especially worthy of mention, not just for its size (accommodating over 1000 people with a 30ft wide stage) or Indian Greywood and plaster walls: acoustically it was superb, following the latest theatre practice and benefiting from the specialist expertise of Hope Bagenal. Also on the first floor were three committee rooms, the lady members', reception room etc. The ground and second floor were predominantly used for departmental offices. Overall the internal alterations have been minor, the building having been restored to its original appearance in 1990.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 21st August 1998

NOTES

1. *The Builder*, 2 Jan 1904, 7.

2. King Baker, W., *Acton Middlesex*, 2nd. ed, 279

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95821

EALING NGR: TQ 1754 8071

NEW BROADWAY (FORMERLY UXBRIDGE ROAD)

EALING TOWN HALL

This impressive civic building is the result of several stages of development, all contained behind a unified façade of Kentish ragstone in the Gothic style. The earliest part to the west was designed by Charles Jones and built 1888-9. Jones was also responsible for the preceding council offices, built in 1874, on the Mall. During a long and active 33-year career as surveyor and engineer to successive authorities Jones oversaw the development of this rapidly expanding suburban district, and designed much of its municipal architecture. The contrast between the modest offices of the 1870s and the much grander town hall, built only fourteen years later, reflects this growth as well as the emerging municipal aspirations of the area. This was also reflected in the development of Ealing's local government, commencing with the formation of a local board in 1863, upgraded first to an urban district council in 1894 and then to a municipal borough in 1901.

The original building had a three-storey gabled central entrance, with octagonal turrets and a two-storey oriel window. The other dominant feature of the two-storey asymmetrical elevation, which has end bays with attic storeys and pavilion roofs, is an off-centre clock tower topped with a spirelet. Jones' choice of Gothic for his town hall was unusual, perhaps reflecting local preferences, classical or Italianate was the norm for such buildings within the metropolitan London area at this time. The interior has a formal arrangement, with a central entrance and stair hall, leading via the top-lit Imperial stone stair to a first-floor board room (later council chamber) at the front of the building. The Gothic of the façade is carried in to the interior, as, for example, in the stair hall, which has columns with polished marble shafts and foliate capitals. Likewise the former council chamber (now used as function room and renamed the Nelson Room in honour of a former mayor) has a timber-framed wagon-type roof, and a large carved chimney piece and overmantel. The other principal space is the public hall at the rear of the building, called the Victoria Hall to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and paid for by public subscription. The hall may have been added in 1897 but it was always intended, and the date of opening is given on the ceremonial plaque as 1888.[1] The most distinguished features of the space, its hammer-beam roof and rose window, were covered over in an unsympathetic modernisation in 1957 (reversed during recent renovations). The reworking of the stage area and a kitchen extension, carried out at the same time, still remain. By 1902 several other municipal functions had been gathered together at the town hall site, including swimming baths, a fire station and corporation stables, all designed by Jones. His last involvement with the town hall seems to have been a two-bay office extension at the eastern end of the building, for which designs were submitted in 1913, the year of Jones' death.[2]

In 1927 George H. Fellowes Prynne was appointed architect for an ambitious extension to the town hall, but his death that same year left the completion and execution of his designs in the hands of his former assistant A.W. Johnston. The work was carried out in 1930-1, by Walter J. Dickens, at a cost of £64,000. The new building essentially repeated the arrangement of the

Victorian building, having a gabled entrance, but with more pronounced octagonal towers, and a processional route comprising an entrance hall, Imperial stone stair and first-floor council chamber (this time placed at the rear). Whilst the exterior recycles the Gothic style of its predecessor, the interior has a slightly different character, with a hint of Scottish Baronial giving the principal spaces the feel of an Ealing Studios film set. The weighty stone staircase includes such quirky details as massive newels of truncated columns and a built-in display case for the civic plate set into the back wall of the upper stair landing. The extraordinary 23ft-high council chamber is actually simpler than originally intended, abandoned for 'acoustic reasons and as a matter of economy' having been 'planned after the model of a college chapel with [a] barrel-vaulted roof 33ft high, with the mayor seated in an apse 40ft distant from the furthest seat'. [3] Another public hall, named the Queens Hall, was provided in the basement, as was a mayor's parlour that connected with the council chamber, and committee rooms. A new drawing office was built as an extension to the earlier building.

With this addition the town hall reached its present extent. Fortunately much of the layout survives, as do many of the original fitting - the later alterations being largely limited to the insertion of lifts in the areas adjoining both ceremonial stairs. Of the outbuildings, the swimming baths have gone, their site now occupied by office accommodation, but the former stables and fire station still survive in different use. After 1965, the most pressing need for the London Borough of Ealing has been for office space and several adjoining buildings have been taken over for this use, thereby allowing much of the town hall to remain in ceremonial or public use. The most notable of these encircling additions is the building known as the 'civic centre', a large speculative office development of 1980-3 by Sidney Kaye, Eric Firmin & Partners, distinguished by its 'curious spanner-shaped plan'. [4]

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 20th August 1998

NOTES

[1] Sources vary, the later date is given in Borough of Ealing, *Public Halls*, 1938/9.

[2] Public Record Office, HLG 6/1143.

[3] *The Builder*, 24 Apr 1931, 754.

[4] Cherry B and Pevsner N, *Buildings of England London 3 North West* (London 1991) 169.

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GREATER LONDON

NBR INDEX NO: 95820

EALING

NGR: TQ 1801 8081

NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK

(FORMERLY EALING LOCAL BOARD OFFICES)

This Gothic-style, Kentish-ragstone office building was put up in 1874 for Ealing Local Board. Its architect was Charles Jones who was responsible for much of Ealing's municipal architecture during his long stint as surveyor and engineer (1863-1913) to successive local authorities. The large bay window on the ground floor suggests that the board room was originally located here, with the offices, given a separate dedicated entrance, above. The building, presently used as a bank, was outgrown by the local authority within twelve years and replaced by the new town hall on Uxbridge Road (now New Broadway).

Report by Joanna Smith

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Cherry B and Pevsner N, *The Buildings of England London 3: North West* (London 1991), 175.

GREATER LONDON

NBR INDEX NO: 95822

LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING

NGR: TQ 1260 8010

SOUTH ROAD

SOUTHALL CIVIC BUILDINGS (UNCOMPLETED)

Following the formation of Southall Municipal Borough in 1936, ambitious proposals were drawn up for a new municipal buildings to replace the modest Victorian town hall on the High Street. A site on South Road was acquired and an architect appointed, Reginald Uren of Slater, Moberly & Uren - then enjoying professional acclaim for his newly completed Hornsey Town Hall. Uren devised an asymmetrical, informally arranged scheme, showing the same Dutch and Scandinavian influences as his earlier building. The design received formal approval in 1938 and construction began the following year. But only the basement had been completed when war-time restrictions on local authority expenditure brought work to a halt in 1940. In 1950 the council sought permission from the Ministry of Health to complete the building but local government offices were still then a low priority for government spending. So instead the council commissioned new plans from the Uren, now a partner in Slater, Uren and Pike, and adapted the existing structure as a civil defence control centre. The proposals were still being pursued in the late 1950s and were probably only abandoned in the face of impending local government reforms. Southall council's experience was similar to that of Barking, where the construction of a new town hall had also been halted in its early stages by the war, but here the local authority persevered and managed to complete the building in 1954-8.

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON

NBR INDEX NO: 95883

LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING

NGR: TQ 1284 8041

HIGH STREET

SOUTHALL TOWN HALL

This modest municipal building was built in 1897-8 by Southall-Norwood Urban District Council to the designs of a local architect, T. Newell. The exterior of white brick with stone dressings is in a debased Classical style with a central pediment and entrance portico. The interior is notably modest, with only a simple wooden stair and a terrazzo floor in the entrance hall. Almost no original fittings survive but the room sizes would suggest that the board room was located on the first floor. The iron-and-glass canopy to the main entrance, and the flanking underground public toilets, are a later addition. Plans to replace the building were actively pursued by the Municipal Borough of Southall after it was created in 1936, but these plans were ultimately unsuccessful (see Southall Civic Building, NBR Index file no: 95822). The successor authority, the London Borough of Ealing, sold the building in 1994.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 28th January 1994

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 98879**

ENFIELD **NGR: TQ 3435 9333**

FORE STREET

EDMONTON TOWN HALL (DEMOLISHED)

This building, erected in 1884-5 to accommodate the local board, vestry and magistrates, was designed in a Perpendicular-Gothic style, an usual choice for a local government building at this date. The architect of the brick-and-stone building was Mr Eachus (engineer to the local board) and E A Ram and it was constructed by W Tongue of Woolwich at a cost of £9000. Its elevations were distinguished by large traceried windows on the first floor, lighting the public hall behind. In 1899 Edmonton Urban District Council (formed from the local board in 1894) invited three architects to prepare designs for a substantial addition to the town hall. These were to include an extension to the existing building for a new council chamber, committee rooms and further offices, as well as separate swimming baths, a mortuary and post-mortem room, stores, stabling and a cart shed. These additions were built between 1899 and 1902 to the competition winning designs of W Gilbee Scott, and cost £35,000. The extension to the existing town hall followed the style of the earlier building, even duplicating its large traceried windows for the new first-floor council chamber. A formal procession route was also provided, to give the enlarged town hall a degree of civic consciousness it had hitherto lacked.

In the 1930s proposals were made for a replacement for the town hall, perhaps prompted by a change in status, as Edmonton became a municipal borough in 1937. These plans were thwarted by the outbreak of the war and a subsequent scheme for a new civic centre in the neighbourhood of the existing town hall was overtaken by local government reforms in the 1960s. The successor authority, the London Borough of Enfield, had no use for Edmonton Town Hall after a new civic centre in Enfield was completed in 1975 and the building was demolished in the 1980s.

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95824**

ENFIELD **NGR: TQ 3290 9680**

SILVER STREET

ENFIELD CIVIC CENTRE

This two-phased scheme of the 1950s and 1970s, both by Eric G Broughton & Associates, was built in response to the changing municipal needs of the successive local authorities in Enfield. Although Enfield Urban District Council (formed in 1895) had purchased land in Church Street for a new town hall in 1902, nothing had come of it. In 1939, the council acquired the present site on the east side of Silver Street, but the onset of the Second World War and the consequential financial restrictions held up the development of the site until the 1950s. The first component, an office block and council suite, built 1957-61, finally materialised following the creation of Enfield Municipal Borough in 1955, by which date it was the second largest urban district in the country. Until 1961 therefore, when the first part of the civic centre was opened, the council continued to meet at Little Park, Gentlemen's Row - the council offices of the former local board.

The design for the new civic centre was the result of an open competition held in 1957, which called initially for a scheme of two units: an office block and council suite, and a town hall. The competition, which attracted 108 entries, was notable for the brevity of the report by the assessor, S Rowland Pierce, which amounted to just six sentences for the three winners.[1] One architectural magazine was so aghast at this it published the following comment:

> Cannot the RIBA persuade assessors to prepare reasoned analyses? The designers placed second and third in this particular competition might like to know more about the way their designs Afall behind that placed first in a number of matters.≅ And they might also like to know exactly *how* the winning design is well related to . . . the central area of Enfield, which is just about the least flattering thing anyone could hope to say about a building.[2]

Broughton's elegantly simple scheme set the building back from the road, behind a spacious forecourt that incorporated the existing New River loop in a decorative way: a long pool running the length of the building. The two storey, reinforced-concrete-framed principal units are connected at first-floor level by an enclosed bridge, to make a T-shaped building. Internally, both units are divided horizontally into two levels, each with a different function. The principal level, on the first floor, contains the members' accommodation and the council chamber, reached via the connecting bridge. The ground floor of the front range houses the more public spaces, a wing of offices leading off a diffusely lit, welcoming entrance hall (the area beneath the council chamber being used originally for a bicycle store and kitchen). Simplicity of circulation is one of the most impressive

aspects of the design: a right turn from the entrance hall leads to both the offices and the cantilevered main staircase that reaches the civic spaces above. This separation of the public offices and members' accommodation was designed to enable the public to intuitively find its way, without recourse to asking directions. High quality internal finishes, including White Sicilian and Green Genoa marbles, anodised aluminium metalwork, muhuhu wood strip and missanda wood block flooring, are liberally used throughout the public and civic spaces, combining to cheerful yet courteous effect. Adorning the staircase is an appliqué wall panel by Gerald Holtom depicting the history of the borough.

Externally, the functional division between the first floor and ground floor is expressed in the arrangement and detailing of features: the ground floor walls are of blue brick and incorporate smaller square windows; the first floor projects and is lit by larger windows. The effect is heightened by clerestory windows, which visually separate the two floors. In front of the building, the long pool, which reflects the windows, and a bronze sculpture of the Enfield Beast (the municipal symbol) by R Bentley Claughton, augment the overall effect.

The second phase was not accomplished until 1972-5, presumably for reasons of finance. It consists of a twelve-storey reinforced-concrete-frame office block clad in stainless steel, and a three-storey block housing car parking and offices. This shimmering tower block - then Enfield's tallest building - was originally not intended to be so visually commanding, but the enlarged, post-1965 borough necessitated a doubling of the original intended height. Despite the towering size of this block, the fifties entrance hall still triumphs as the main focal point and centre of gravity of the whole scheme. Phase three, the assembly hall, was never realized.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 25th November 1998

NOTES

1. The second and third awards went respectively to Clifford Culpin & Associates, and Anthony Robert Osbornes.

2. *The Architects= Journal*, 12 December 1957, 870

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GREATER LONDON

NBR INDEX NO: 95825

ENFIELD

NGR: TQ 3090 9240

GREEN LANES

SOUTHGATE TOWN HALL

Local architect Arthur Rowland Barker was instructed by Southgate Local Board of Health to design it new offices that resembled a large private residence rather than a public building. This was presumably prompted by a sense of appropriateness, as the intended neighbourhood for the building was still predominantly rural in character. The result, a modest 'Queen Anne' style two-storey brick structure completed in 1893, was memorably described by one local newspaper as 'a Town Hall in a turnip field'. The subsequent growth of the area required that extensive additions be made to the building in 1914. This extension saw the doubling of the building's frontage, the join still visible in the brickwork and roof tiling, and the aggrandisement of its main façade through the addition of a new porch, name plaque and clock tower (a neat reversal of the original requirement). A library was added behind the town hall, opening in 1940. When Southgate became part of the London Borough of Enfield in 1965 the administrative functions were centralised in the civic centre on Silver Street and Southgate Town Hall became merely offices. This has inevitably resulted in the loss of fittings in the civic spaces such as the council chamber, although these were never particularly grand. The building now has a mixed occupancy including the local studies library.

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95827

GREENWICH NGR: TQ 3820 7735

GREENWICH HIGH ROAD/ROYAL HILL

MERIDIAN HOUSE (FORMERLY GREENWICH TOWN HALL)

Greenwich Town Hall was built for the Metropolitan Borough of Greenwich in 1938-9 to house municipal offices, a civic suite and public halls. First designs in 1935 followed the appointment of the architects, Culpin & Son. The resultant scheme was the work of Clifford Culpin and was an important step towards his becoming a town-hall specialist (see Poplar). He adopted a modern style directly influenced by the Dutch architect, Willem Dudok: 'I was a devoted admirer of Dudok and when I had the Greenwich building to design, I went to Hilversum and though the great man had a house full of guests, he devoted a long day to showing me his best buildings'. Though the machine aesthetic of Culpin's contemporary building at Poplar is absent (more in a Mendlesohnian strand of modernism), Greenwich Town Hall is avowedly Modernist in its uncluttered and irregular elevations, juxtaposing verticality, through a clock tower, with the horizontality of flat-roofed, low-rise office blocks. For Pevsner in 1951 this was 'the only town hall of any London borough to represent the style of our time adequately' (Hornsey and Wembley were then still outside of the county of London). Its elevations are subtly decorative, with facing bricks bonded to create a pervasive striped pattern. A subsidiary corner entrance retains a canopy carrying a Zodiac mosaic, part of a largely lost decorative scheme by W.D. Suddaby and Charles E. Fryer. The viewing window at the top of the clock tower is directed principally towards the Thames 'with all its teeming activity', and the clock faces were intended to be seen across the borough, picked out with blue faience and enamel dials, and illuminated. The informal planning derives from Hilversum. The T-plan of the main block fronting on to the High Road had spine corridors with offices. The range along Royal Hill housed the first-floor civic suite, behind which the council chamber sheltered, raised over a car park on four cylindrical reinforced-concrete columns. The public halls, now the least altered interiors, are to the rear, with a minor hall under the main assembly hall which is entered from beneath a gently curving canopy in front of a Travertine-marble clad foyer. In 1972-4 the building was converted to a range of non-municipal uses: an attic storey (allowed for by Culpin) was added, and a mezzanine floor was inserted into the council chamber.

Report by Peter Guillery

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95827

GREENWICH NGR: TQ 374 773

GREENWICH HIGH ROAD

WEST GREENWICH HOUSE (FORMERLY GREENWICH PUBLIC OFFICES)

This building was erected in 1876-7 by the Greenwich District Board of Works following a maladminstered, if not corrupt, competition, won by a local architect W Wallen (who may also have been architect to the Greenwich Board of Guardians). His building is thinly Italianate, with a front elevation of stock brick and Portland stone dressing. When built, its central feature was a portico and small clock tower, finished with a zinc-covered dome and lantern. The loss of these features (still present in the 1930s) has had the consequence of making the building more squarely domestic than intended. Its internal layout followed the usual arrangement for such buildings, having offices on the ground floor with a staircase to the rear leading to the first-floor board room and committee rooms. More unusually, the large board room (57ft 6in by 40ft) was given a public gallery, indicating perhaps that the space was also intended to be used for public functions - a separate public hall had not been thought necessary. The contractor was W.Tongue of Plumstead, and it was built at a cost of £9,500 including site, building and furnishings.

Following the formation of the Metropolitan Borough of Greenwich in 1900 the building functioned as the town hall until 1939, when the new municipal buildings on Royal Hill were opened. In use for a time as government offices, the building became a community centre in 1956 and changed its name to West Greenwich House two years later.

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95826

GREENWICH NGR: TQ 4310 7888

CALDERWOOD STREET

WOOLWICH OLD TOWN HALL

The first town hall in Woolwich was built in 1840-1 on the junction of William Street (now Calderwood Street) and Upper Market Street (now Market Street) to the designs of a Mr Kinton. This simple classical building was then promptly sold (for a profit) to the Metropolitan Police for use as a police court.[1] The vestry and commissioners then built a replacement on a nearby plot on William Street in 1841-2 to a design closely comparable design to that of its predecessor. The pedimented and pilastered two-storey building has an entirely stone-faced façade, downgraded to brick and stone on the return elevations. When first built it comprised a hall and board room in a *piano nobile* over an apartment and offices. In either 1868 or 1878 (the sources vary) a two-storey extension was added to the William Street frontage and the board room was enlarged. In the early 20th century a two-storey block was added to the rear, fronting onto Lower Market Street (now Polytechnic Street), to provide a new courtroom (prior to its construction the board room had additionally served as county court and coroner's court when required[2]). In 1906 the town hall was superseded by its grandiose successor on Wellington Street, an arresting contrast in ambition and civic pretensions. Furthermore, these two buildings now form part of an impressive municipal grouping - including a public library (1901) police station (1910) magistrates court (1912) and public baths - equalled in London only by the contemporary civic complex at East Ham.

Report by Joanna Smith

NOTES

[1] Shown as a one-storey pedimented building in a drawing dated 1841. See BL Add Ms 16946.

[2] London Metropolitan Archives, COR/3/44.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95884

GREENWICH NGR: TQ 4344 7877

WELLINGTON STREET

WOOLWICH TOWN HALL AND COUNCIL OFFICES

SUMMARY

Woolwich has an Edwardian town hall in the grand manner, a rich essay in the English Baroque style built in 1903-6. It was designed by (Sir) Alfred Brumwell Thomas, one of the main exponents of the style, who was awarded the commission because of his earlier association with Plumstead Vestry, which in 1900 was merged into the newly-formed Metropolitan Borough of Woolwich. The town hall is a substantial two-storey building comprising municipal offices, a first-floor civic suite, and a public hall. A symmetrical front block has an entrance façade to Wellington Street, so florid that there appears to be more Portland-stone dressing than red-brick walling. A clock tower rises in the western return elevation, beyond which is a much simpler office range and a grandly treated entrance to the public hall. The external grandeur is matched internally, most notably by a triple-domed and galleried entrance hall of a spaciousness without compare in any London town hall. Stylistically up-to-date in its use of the revived Baroque, Woolwich Town Hall led the way in proclaiming the maturity of municipal architecture in London.

BACKGROUND

The building of the town hall was a direct consequence of local government reforms, as the civic geography of the capital was redefined and given an enhanced status. In 1900 the Metropolitan Borough of Woolwich was formed from no less than ten smaller authorities, the most significant of which were Woolwich Local Board[1] and Plumstead Vestry but which also included Eltham Vestry and Lee District Board of Works. The new body inherited an existing Town Hall on Williams (now Calderwood) Street in Woolwich, put up in 1841-2, and a Vestry Hall of 1865 on Maxey Road in Plumstead, but neither of these buildings were large enough or possessed the requisite civic gravitas, so the provision of new offices was an early order of business. Consideration of where to build the new municipal buildings was complicated by local politics. Despite the impending reforms Plumstead Vestry had held a competition in 1899 for new council offices, a public hall, and persevered with Alfred Brumwell Thomas's winning scheme to the end, apparently as a way of retaining some civic activity in the area. But when the new authority came into being a site in central Woolwich fronting onto Wellington Street was selected instead, a short distance from the existing town hall.

Consideration turned next to the appointment of an architect. There were certain advantages for the council in giving the commission to Alfred Brumwell Thomas, his design for Plumstead Municipal Buildings had been 'placed first in open competition and adopted by the late Plumstead Vestry, and .... great expense would be incurred in having a fresh competition and much time lost thereby'.[2] It has been suggested that Thomas simply reused his Plumstead design for the Woolwich building but this seems not to have been the case. Between March and April

1902 Thomas produced two alternative schemes, one with the public hall to the front and with both principal entrances on Wellington Street (which the council rejected), and another with and the main entrance to the front and the public hall at the rear (which was accepted). Final amendments were made in July 1903, after construction had started, when the return elevation to Market Street was simplified to make a saving of £1000.[3]

Thomas, born plain Alfred in 1868 – the Brumwell was adopted after he started his own practice in 1894 – was the son of a surveyor to Rotherhithe Vestry. He made his name by winning the high profile competition for Belfast City Hall in 1898. The Plumstead competition came the following year, and in 1903, while Belfast and Woolwich were under construction, his design for Stockport Town Hall was awarded first premium. Belfast City Hall, for which Thomas was rewarded with a knighthood, and Woolwich Town Hall were both completed in 1906, Stockport was finished two years later. All three buildings were in the then highly fashionable English Baroque Revival style, derived from the architecture of Wren, Hawksmoor and Vanbrugh. The style had emerged in the 1880s, and was thought particularly apposite for public buildings because 'it was a very *English* Classical style, and its buildings were of a splendour that seemed appropriate for the centre of a great empire'.[4] A pioneering example of its use was John Brydon's Chelsea Vestry Hall of 1885-7, although the building to which Woolwich shows a clearer debt is Colchester Town Hall (1897-1902) by John Belcher.

Local politics in Woolwich had a strongly Progressive character at the turn of the 20th century, unsurprising perhaps given the highly industrial character of the district. The town hall was constructed under a Labour-run council and was officially opened by Will Crooks, Labour MP for Woolwich, on the 13th January 1906. However, this progressive tradition did not preclude displays of patriotism, and a marble statue of Queen Victoria by Frederick Pomeroy was bought specifically for the new town hall. This was paid for by public subscription and was unveiled in 1905 by The Duke of Connaught. Although some economies had been necessary during the building of the town hall, the chairman of the building committee, Councillor Bishop, declared at the time of its opening that 'everything of the best had been procured, and there was nothing shoddy' in its construction. The building cost in total £95,000 (£80,000 excluding the site) and the general contractor was Messrs J E Johnson & Son of Leicester (who also worked on Belfast City Hall).[5]

The town hall now forms the heart of an impressive complex of largely late 19th and early 20th century public buildings. The earliest of these is the old town hall of 1841-2 on Calderwood Street, of striking modesty when compared to the municipal splendour of its successor, but other buildings include Woolwich Polytechnic (1890-1), a library (1901), a police station (1910), a magistrates court (1912) (presumably built on the site the first town hall of 1840), and public baths. This encircling development inevitably prevented any significant extension to the town hall, although a modest addition was made to the public hall in the 1930s to provide a refreshment area, to designs by the Borough Architect, J Sutcliffe. Instead, further accommodation was provided by construction of new office buildings on Wellington Street. Initially a brick-and stone Neo-Georgian block was built in 1933 for the Engineer's Department, but this was supplemented in the 1950s-60s by a more Modernist style building, also in brick and stone, for the Treasurer's Department. After the local government reforms of 1965 the Metropolitan Borough was merged into the newly formed London Borough of Greenwich and the administration of the new authority was centralised in Woolwich. This in turn led to the

construction of Peggy Middleton House in 1973-7, a sprawling office block faced in red brick and of purely functional appearance, designed under the Borough Architect, J M Moore. [6] This incremental expansion on other sites has been to the benefit of the town hall, preserving much of its interior from alteration and allowing it to perform its original function as the civic focus of the district.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Woolwich Town Hall is a red brick building with Portland stone dressings of two storeys with a basement. The principal elevation to Wellington Street is a symmetrical composition, with a forest of free-standing Ionic columns on the upper storey leading the eye up to a relatively quiet dome. The façade has a nest of pediments and is richly adorned with sculptural embellishments, including a carved relief incorporating the coat of arms to the entrance porch. In the west flank a landmark clock tower rises, with stone enrichment to the upper stages and a pedimented mayor's balcony towards the base. Beyond the architecture is toned down for the range, concluding in a resumption of sculptural embellishment with the pedimented entrance to the public hall at the north end.

Internally, the council offices are dominated by the double-height entrance hall, of unprecedented size and grandeur for a London town hall at this date, with the offices and other spaces arranged around its east, west and south sides. The richly decorated triple-domed entrance hall has been maintained in its original splendour, even retaining its elaborate bronze electroliers. However, Pomeroy's statue of Queen Victoria has been moved from its original location in the centre of the checkerboard hall floor to the gallery level. The space is lit by lunettes and a window over the principal staircase at the north end of the hall and the domes are supported on arches that rise from piers, connected at the first floor level by a continuous gallery. The principal rooms are placed on the first floor, with a suite of committee rooms to the south, overlooking Wellington Street, flanked by what was formerly the mayor's parlour (provided with a balcony) to the west and the mayor's reception room to the east. The suite of interconnecting committee rooms and the mayor's reception room were unsympathetically modernised, probably in the 1970s, and have lost the original panelling, furniture and light fittings. However, these rooms retain the enriched plaster ceilings and original stained-glass windows by Geoffrey Webb, part of an extensive iconographic scheme that is spread throughout the principal spaces of the building to celebrate the historical associations of Woolwich. The mayor's parlour has also undergone significant alteration and has latterly been in use as a kitchen. The council chamber is placed on the east side of the hall, at the north end. The elegant domed chamber retains finely carved original woodwork, including panelling and fixed seating in a horseshoe plan, although some modifications have been made to increase the number of seats, and the original electrolier light fitting has been replaced. To the north of the chamber is an anteroom that still retains the wooden lockers for the use of the council members. The domed public hall, arranged on a Greek-cross plan, with galleries in three 'aisles', is placed to the rear of the offices. This has a different alignment to the offices, and is essentially treated as a separate block, although access was provided between the two components. This remains largely unaltered apart from the kitchen extension to the east side, carried out in 1930.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by James O Davies
Recorded 21st March 1994

NOTES

1 Woolwich had been the only Local Board left in the whole country after the Local Government Act of 1894, continuing until the incorporation of the Borough in 1900, a lifetime of 48 years.

2 Thomas supplied drawings and photographs of recent work including Belfast City Hall, Huddersfield Sanitorium and Exeter Eye Hospital and offered to forego the £500 outstanding from the Plumstead buildings if appointed. Woolwich Borough Council Minutes, 6th March 1902, Greenwich Local Studies Library.

3 The more elaborate treatment of this elevation is shown in a perspective drawing of the 1903 published in the commemorative brochure for the unveiling of the statue of Queen Victoria in December 1905.

4 Service, A, *Edwardian Architecture* (London 1977) 142.

5 E.F.E. Jefferson, *The Woolwich Story, 1890-1965*, (London 1970) 62.

6 This building was named after a former mayor of Greenwich.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95831

HACKNEY NGR: 3493 8469

MARE STREET

HACKNEY TOWN HALL (DEMOLISHED)

This handsome Italianate building, erected in 1864-66 for Hackney Vestry, replaced the vestry offices put up in 1802 elsewhere on Mare Street (surviving as the HSBC Bank). The building was the subject of a limited architectural competition held in 1863-4, won by Sancton Wood, although all the competing designs exceeded the stipulated amount, £5,500. As a consequence a second competition was held, this time won by Messrs Hammack & Lambert.[1] Theirs was the design built, although the revised limit, £7000, also proved insufficient; the winning tender, by Messrs Maers and Sons, was for £7835 and the final cost, including the site, was 'about £15,000'.[2]

The two-storey building was described at the time as being 'in the French-Italian style', the use of Gothic having been proscribed by the terms of the competition. The 100ft-long main façade was faced in Portland Stone, with the exception of the recessed end bays which, like the other elevations, were of brick with stone dressings. Its raised central section was given an ornate treatment, with 'rockwork' or vermiculation to the plinth, a rusticated ground floor and a heavy cornice on chunky consoles/brackets with a parapet above.[3] A substantial Doric porch, with a Venetian window to the first floor and, projecting above the parapet, a circular opening with an elaborate surround, intended for a clock that was never installed, created the central focus. This treatment, reminiscent of a Renaissance palazzo, was used for several other east London vestry halls built in the 1860s and 1870s, notably Shoreditch, Mile End and St George-in-the-East, Cable Street, although none perhaps equalled the exuberance of Hackney's façade.

The boardroom, later council chamber, was located on the first floor at the front of the building, occupying the five centre bays. This had a public gallery with a cast-iron balustrade at one end and an Italianate finish throughout, although more low key than the exterior.[4] The Dennett system of fireproof flooring was employed at Hackney, one of its first noted uses in this type of building in London.[5]

In 1895-8 the building was extended at both ends in a similar style by Gordon, Lowther, & Gunton to make an impressive eleven-bay frontage. Despite these additions, the Metropolitan Borough of Hackney, the successor to the vestry, was considering various proposals for expanding and improving the building within 30 years. An extension that more than doubled the building in size was mooted ,but it was eventually decided to build anew and in 1934 construction of a new town hall to the rear of the existing building began. The old town hall was demolished in February 1937, as its replacement neared completion. Its site was used for a forecourt and formal gardens.

Report by Joanna Smith

NOTES

1.The initial winner Mr Sancton Wood did not recompete, believing that he should have been allowed to make the necessary alterations to his winning designs. *Builder*, 12th March 1864, p187

2.*Building News*, 5th October 1866, p669,

3.ibid

4. Photograph in Hackney Archives, P10495 (1-2), dated c.1910.

[5] *The Builder*, 1866, 482.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95831

HACKNEY NGR: TQ 3487 8470

MARE STREET

HACKNEY TOWN HALL

Hackney Town Hall, the third building to be so called and the second on this site, was built in 1934-7 for the Metropolitan Borough of Hackney. A conventionally classical-style building, of three-storeys with semi-basements, it is built on a freestanding site with a civic forecourt and formal gardens in front and a car park to the side. The whole scheme was the result of a limited architectural competition held in 1934, won by H. V. Lanchester and T. A. Lodge, and was built largely as designed by Dove Brothers of Islington. The layout of the building is logical and compact, following an established pattern, having a central council chamber placed in a cross wing, committee rooms to the front and an assembly hall at the rear. Externally all four sides of the rectangular-plan building are faced in Portland stone, decorated with low-key classical detailing. The long 13-bay symmetrical façade steps gently up to the centre. Attention is further focussed on these middle bays by the placing of a broad flight of steps before the central doorway, which is surmounted by a stone balcony on chunky brackets, with tall round-headed windows to the first floor, all topped by a clock, coat of arms and flagpole. As with many of 'inner' London's civic buildings the site was not generous. However, the civic dignity of the building is significantly enhanced by the giving over of the entire site of the previous town hall to make a forecourt – comprising formally arranged raised beds, the walls of which incorporated pillars with lamps, flanking a central pathway.

The predecessor of Hackney Town Hall was an Italianate building, designed by Messr Hammack and Lambert and put up in 1864-6, that had itself replaced modest vestry offices opened elsewhere on Mare Street in 1802. The Victorian building was substantially extended in 1895-6 but, after local government reforms replaced Hackney District Board of Works with a Metropolitan Borough in 1900, it was soon outgrown. In 1930 Professor S.A. Adshead was consulted about improving facilities and, although consideration was given to an extension that would have effectively doubled the town hall in size, it was eventually decided that replacement was the only solution.[1] Adjoining property was acquired and in 1934 a limited competition was held, with Adshead acting as assessor.[2] The old town hall, in use until its replacement was near completion, was demolished in February 1937.

That the new town hall would have a courtyard plan seems to have been preordained by the limitations of the site and the terms of the competition. All six of the competing architects submitted classical designs; Lanchester and Lodge's winning scheme being described as 'a dignified and well-designed building, conceived on traditional lines but with a freshness of treatment that shows the appropriateness of the traditional manner to buildings of a civic type.'[3] This firm had considerable experience of designing such buildings, their Beckenham Town Hall, designed in 1927 and built in a toned-down version in 1931-2, being in many ways a rehearsal for Hackney.[4] In keeping with the traditional precepts of town hall design, the offices at Hackney were placed on the ground floor, with independent entrances for the different

departments, whilst the 'ceremonial' spaces were grouped together on the first floor. The second floor and the basement housed yet more offices, as well as a hall-keepers flat, staff canteen and strong rooms etc. The courtyard layout plan allowed for continuous corridors giving closed circulation at each level. The council chamber, at the head of the 'processional route' leading from the main entrance, was accessible to both the 'business' and 'ceremonial' sides whilst isolated from the noises within and outside the building.

As Hackney is a relatively small building its interior spaces are by necessity compact, although the interior does not lack for civic dignity, its principal areas enhanced by a decorative scheme employing simple geometric forms, strong clean lines, and high quality fittings. The low entrance hall has stairs to left and right leading to a more spacious upper hall, lit at the top and sides. Both areas are partly faced in coloured marble with column lights; these become pillar lights on the first floor, adding style and interest. The double-height, side-lit council chamber is part panelled in walnut and other decorative woods and retains the original purpose-built seating and tables, in the usual horseshoe arrangement, all the work of Waring and Gillow Ltd. Beneath the small public gallery in the west wall is a room, now a chairstore, that originally formed a vestibule to the assembly hall beyond. The hall, which occupies much of the length of the rear range, is a comparatively modest space; when first built, its capacity was only for 600 people. Unusually the hall has sliding wooden partitions that allow for subdivision into three rooms, more characteristic of reception suites than public halls, and presumably intended to give greater flexibility of use. Although it has a gallery the hall has apparently never had a permanent stage. Its entrance foyer retains the original pay box on the ground floor, which echoes the arrangement of the main arrangement in having stairs rising to the left and right sides. One distinctive feature of the town hall is the display of framed photographs of former mayors from 1900 onwards adorning the first floor corridor, unusual in the consistency of presentation and impressive in extent. Like so many of the principal rooms, the suite of three interconnecting committee rooms occupying the centre front of the building retains its original panelling and light fittings. It was partly because of the relatively unaltered state of the interiors and the survival of many original fittings that the building was listed in 1991.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 6th July 1998

NOTES

1.Hackney Archives, H/EP 34-5.

2. The other competitors were C. Cowles Voysey (placed second), C.S. Joseph, C.A. James, Robert Atkinson and Louis de Soissons. The most imaginative external treatment was by Robert Atkinson, its stepped massing, quirky detailing and long windows were more successfully used in the competition winning design for Wallington Town Hall (1935) see the *Architect & Building News*, 11 May 1934.

3.*The Builder*, 2 July 1937, 18.

4. Beckenham was also a classical building on a small-scale with a courtyard plan and a central council chamber. See NBR index no: 95897.

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GREATER LONDON

BUILDINGS INDEX NO: 95830

HACKNEY

NGR: TQ 3498 8500

MARE STREET

HSBC BANK (FORMERLY HACKNEY OLD TOWN HALL)

This classical building, inscribed 'Hackney Old Town Hall' on its façade, was erected in 1802 as a watch house, engine house and committee rooms for the Vestry of St John, Hackney. It was built on the site of the Church House and was in use until 1866 when a new town hall was opened a short distance to the south on Mare Street. The parish churchwardens wished to see the redundant building used for 'purposes of a useful public character' such as a reading room, but this was not to be. In 1899 part of the building was leased to the London City and Midland Bank, the predecessors of the present occupant, although some official use continued - a Registrar was operating from the first floor as late as 1938. The two-storey building is modestly-sized but quite grand in appearance, being ashlar-faced to all but the rear elevation. Its main façade is embellished by a central pediment, balustrades and central doorcase surmounted by a scrolled open pediment and cartouche. However, this level of finish is not original, during its years of municipal use only the front elevation was stone-faced, and this had a simpler doorcase, pediment and balustrade. The enrichment presumably occurred in 1900, the year given in the over-door cartouche. The building was badly damaged by a landmine in 1941 and was only restored and reoccupied in 1952.

The internal arrangements are given in a 1860 report by Hackney Board of Words on proposed improvements to the 'Town Hall'. The ground floor had offices off an entrance hall and an open-well stair in the south-west corner whilst on the first floor was a Boardroom (31ft 6in x 19 ft 6in) and a committee room. Such planning became the norm for the metropolitan vestry halls built in the wake of the mid century local government reforms. If the compact and differentiated layout noted at Hackney in 1860 is the original one (some alterations were carried out in 1854) then it would appear that these modest parochial offices were precursors of many of London's Victorian vestry halls.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95885**

HACKNEY **NGR: TQ 3334 8265**

OLD STREET

SHOREDITCH TOWN HALL

This building is perhaps the most evocative survival from the era of the reformed vestries. It is an ensemble, the consequence of the three distinct building phases spanning 70 years. The original vestry hall of 1866-7 now forms the eastern portion of the building, its Italianate Portland stone façade typical for its date. The architect was surveyor to Shoreditch Vestry, Caesar A. Long, who provided them with a generously sized board room to the rear of the building, along with an impressive first-floor public hall. Alterations were made in 1893 by Charles Barry including the addition of single-bay stair towers at the front and an internal reordering. A sympathetically styled western extension was added in 1901-3 for the newly formed Shoreditch Metropolitan Borough, designed by William G. Hunt. The enlarged façade was given a short tower to unify the two parts, whilst the addition was adorned with sculptural decorations celebrating Shoreditch's municipal achievements. Following a serious fire in 1904 repairs to the public hall were carried out by A.G. Cross and a broken pediment was added to Long's façade. A functional brick-faced rear wing completes the ensemble, designed by the borough architect C.T. Fulcher and put up 1937-8.

The construction of a vestry hall had been under consideration since 1863, advanced by the purchase of a site on Old Street in Shoreditch in 1864. The district was already extensively developed by this date and the vestry had to spend a considerable sum, some £7,500, on acquiring the site. Moreover, the vestry wanted a building that would reflect credit on themselves and promote the virtues of municipal government to others. Such a building could not be accomplished cheaply and the relatively large sum, £22,000, had to be borrowed from the Mutual Life Assurance Company in order to finance it.[1] Long's design was approved in 1865 and construction commenced the same year, the foundation stone being laid in 1866 by John Thwaite, Chairman of the Metropolitan Board of Works. The work, carried out by firm of John Perry of Stratford, was completed in the following year.

The five-bay façade of original vestry hall is faced in Portland stone, the use of brick having been proscribed by the vestry because it was 'unfitted for the dense atmosphere of the heart of London'.[2] The symmetrical elevation is designed in the manner of a Renaissance palazzo, with a rusticated ground floor, tall round-headed windows and arcade of Corinthian columns pilasters to the first floor and a columnar balustrade with urn finials above a dentil cornice. A flight of steps and an Ionic porch precede the main entrance By the 1860s the classically derived Italianate style was in vogue throughout the capital, favoured for banks and other commercial structures as well for public buildings. For the reformed vestries this 'businesslike' style avoiding the ecclesiastical associations of the Gothic Revival. This fitted in well with the intentions of Shoreditch, who had directed that the design of their new vestry hall 'should be such as would indicate the public character of the edifice, not extravagantly ornamented but of a substantial and durable character'.[3] It proved equally appealing to the other East End authorities at Hackney, Mile End, Bromley-by-Bow, St George in the East and Limehouse, who

all used the style for their new buildings, erected in 1860s and 1870s.

The ground floor of the vestry hall was planned with offices for the vestry clerk and parish surveyor, to either side of a broad central corridor. This passage widened to form a pillared vestibule with a large board room (59ft by 30ft) beyond, described as the 'assembly-room of the vestry' which had some 120 members at this time.[4] This is now the only one of Long's rooms to survive in anything like its original form, although some post-fire restoration work was carried out in 1904-5 and its (non-original) furniture was removed after 1965. It is an impressive space, with flat half-height Doric pilasters, semi-circular three-quarter height Ionic pilasters and a coved ceiling with lozenge pattern. The original entrance, in the centre of the north wall, is now blocked but its position suggests that the seating may have faced south. In common with most vestry board rooms it did not have a public gallery although the later addition of such a feature is more uncommon. The main stairs rose to the left and right sides of the vestibule, with a pair of secondary stairs off the central corridor, given their own separate side entrances.[5] The first floor was wholly taken up by the public hall 'the place of gathering for the mass meetings of the parishioners on all important matters of public discussion, the concert-room, the ball-room, the lecture-room of the locality'.[6] This was an impressively sized facility, when licensed in 1891 the hall's capacity was given as 1220 seated and 320 standing (1540 in total), decorated in 'the composite order' and lit by four sun-burners.[7] It had galleries to three sides and an apsidal end, with two pairs of stairs along its sides, one leading to the gallery and the other to the ground.[8] The basement level housed offices, strong-rooms and the housekeeper's accommodation. This exemplary layout was well received at the time and was still thought worthy a worthy model by Bermondsey Vestry in 1880.[9]

Minor repairs were made to the building in 1873, for which the architect Robert Walker was responsible, but in 1891 more significant alterations were proposed. These were required by the London County Council in order to license the hall as a place of public entertainment and principally affected the circulation areas. The architect for these alterations, which were carried out in 1892-3, was Charles Barry.[10] It was at this time that the stair towers to the front of the building were added, thereby allowing for the removal of the side stairs (the area they had occupied was then turned into offices) which, in turn, increased in the floor area of the public hall. The ground-floor vestibule was also reworked - the main stairs were rebuilt in the same position, the pillars removed and quadrant walls made at the north end.

However, within a short time alterations to the vestry hall were again under consideration, prompted by impending metropolitan government reform. In 1899 a limited competition was held for an extension, effectively doubling the vestry hall in size, but respecting the external appearance and layout of the existing building. The brief was for offices and committee rooms, a reflection of how the administrative responsibilities of local government had grown. Four designs were submitted and William G. Hunt was declared the winner. The work was carried out between 1901-3 for the newly formed Metropolitan Borough of Shoreditch by Killby and Gayford at a cost of almost £22,000. Hunt's additions consisted of a two-storey front range, with basements, and a back wing, also of two-storeys, both extending from the west side of the earlier building. The new three-bay pedimented front façade was 'severely Classical in style, to correspond with the present town-hall'.[11] In the tympanum is a sculptural group composed of the coat of arms of the metropolitan borough, brought into being in 1900, flanked by reclining figures and a scroll inscribed with its motto, 'More Light, More Power'[12] At the base of the two-

stage tower is a torch-bearing figure, identified as Progress by the inscription below. This decorative scheme was intended both as a celebration of the authority's new status as well as commemoration of the considerable achievements of the departing vestry, including the provision of municipally generated electricity and street lighting alluded to in the motto. The scheme was even carried down to the carved keystones of the ground floor windows, which include a representation of Labour.

Internally Hunt's new building had offices off a central corridor that continued into the earlier building on the position of the original side stair. The level of provision was high, it being noted at the time that each office suite was given its own store and plan room, with separate stairs to the WC's and strong rooms in the basement.[13] On the first floor were three committee rooms, that to the front being a single room occupying the full length of the new frontage. This still has its vaulting ceiling and round headed windows, as well as its matching pair of ornamental wooden chimney pieces with carved panels depicting cornucopias. The south eastern committee room, later used as the mayor's parlour, retains a handsome fluted marble chimneypiece. Its companion, later the members' room, has been altered, the style of the fireplace suggesting a date in the 1930s. The rear range consisted of a large committee room adjoining the council chamber and, in a narrow wing to the west, a residence for the hall-keeper. Some reordering was done on the ground floor of the original building, resulting in the partitioning of certain rooms and the addition of several new fireplaces.[14]

Unfortunately this work was barely complete when on the 15th August 1904 the earlier building was seriously damaged by fire. The conflagration had started in the roof of the hall, which was completely destroyed, and caused some damage to the former board room, now the council chamber [15] A.G. Cross was appointed to restore the building and between 1904-5 a new roof was built and the interior of the hall completely redecorated; the opportunity being taken to raise the area behind the stage by a storey to provide a suite of dressing rooms. The broken pediment above Long's façade was added to hide a new steel-framed roof, which seems to have been higher than its predecessor. This curiously detailed addition incorporates balconied windows flanked by niches with urns. Cross also infilled the round heads of the first-floor windows and adorned them with carved wreaths. The hall remains largely as rebuilt, having a barrel vaulted ceiling, with pairs of roof lights to the central bays, and, continuing the previous arrangement, galleries on three sides. For these Cross replaced the iron supports of the original galleries with reinforced concrete beams. The hall does not have a full stage, instead at the south end is a small stage, with a proscenium arch and an apsidal niche with balcony, originally the organ loft, on its back wall. The finish is impressive, with marble-faced pilasters and plaster decoration to the walls and ceiling: the architraves of the organ loft doors being given a particularly bold treatment

In 1937-8 the substantial red-brick extension was built to the rear. This functional addition, consisting mainly of offices, was designed by the Borough Surveyor, C.T. Fulcher and built by R.Schooley & Son, Ltd. It is a three-storey building, with a partial fourth storey, and semi-basements. The main entrance to the south has steps up to a doorway, given a classical stone surround repeated to window surrounds above, and a plaque between the first and second floors; these being the only embellishments to an otherwise plain façade. Internally it has a simple business-like finish but with good quality materials and some degree of finish, for example the stair landings have the borough arms in mosaic, and a ground floor committee is panelled in Austrian Oak and has the borough arms in carved wood over a marble-faced heater surround. It

seems to have been around this time that alterations were made to Long's building including the addition of a pair of decorative iron gates of a 1930s character.

In 1965 the old metropolitan borough was merged into the newly created London Borough of Hackney. As a consequence the town hall was downgraded to offices, initially occupied by Hackney's Health Department. However, the present appearance of the entrance hall, with inserted ceilings and modern wall panelling, predates this reform, being the result of an unsympathetic refurbishment in 1964.[16] But the removal of the seating from the former council chamber, to allow for it to be let as a small hall, was a consequence of the change in status.[17] During the 1990s the increasingly run-down building was gradually emptied of council staff and is presently awaiting restoration and a new use.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photographs by Sid Barker
Recorded 12th September 1996

NOTES

[1] English Heritage historians report by Chris Miele.

[2] Town Hall Building Committee minute book, T/L/1 Hackney Archives..

[3] Brief for new building drawn up in 1865, Hackney Archives.

[4] Sessions rooms for local magistrates were also intended. *The Builder*, March 31 1866.

[5] Plans dated 1890, GLC/AR/BR/19/332, LMA.

[6] *The Builder*, 31 March 1866, 240.

[7] From *Illustrated Times*, 31 Aug 1867, quoted in EH report.

[8] 1890s plans, op cit.

[9] *The Builder*, Feb 21 1880, 234.

[10] Plans dated 1891, GLC/AR/BR/19/332. *The Builder*, 23 April 1892, 331.

[11] *Building News*, 13 Sept 1901, 347.

[12] It is interesting to note that this motto is not in the usual latin ,and therefore more widely comprehensible.

[13] *The Builder*, 19 Oct 1901, 340.

[14] Hunts drawing showing proposed alterations, GLC/AR/BR/19/332.

[15] The furniture may been replaced at this date. *The London Argus*, 20 Aug 1904 447.

[16] Although earlier fittings may survive behind. See GLC/AR/BR/13/109929.

[17] Ibid.

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English Heritage, historians report by Chris Miele.

DCMS, listed building description.

The London Argus, 20 Aug 1904

The Builder, 31 Mar 1866; 24 Aug 1867; 12 Jul 1873; 23 April 1892; 6 May 1899;19 Oct 1901 (ill); 10 June 1905.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 98880

HACKNEY NGR: TQ 3298 8569

MILTON GROVE

STOKE NEWINGTON COUNCIL OFFICES (DEMOLISHED)

This building was erected in 1881 for the South Hornsey Local Board, which administered a large district that formed a detached area of Hornsey parish. The architect was E. Fry, surveyor to the board. The Italianate style of the Portland stone building was characterised as 'thoroughly composite. The visitor will find nearly all the orders and styles represented. The exterior is Composite and Ionic, the ground floor and hall and staircase are Doric, the Boardroom is Corinthian, and so forth. The combinations and changes make a pretty and striking effect'.[1] The building contained the usual functional elements, ground-floor offices and a first-floor board room. Other municipal activities were separately provided for, including a fire station that fronted onto Milton Grove as well as a rear works yard. This included stables and tool-houses 'and other essentials to the work of the Board' as well as a mortuary and post-mortem room, intended to be 'as near an approach to the Parisian Morgue as possible'.[2] A more unusual feature was the surveyors residence, built to the south the offices. This was set back from the main building and had simpler detailing and a brick upper storey to indicate its domestic character.

The town hall, as the building was known following the formation of Stoke Newington Metropolitan Borough in 1900, was extended northwards in 1915. This addition, possibly designed by the borough surveyor William Loveday, matched the brick and stone façade of the surveyors residence. Following the opening of the Stoke Newington Municipal Offices on Church Street in 1937, the Milton Grove building was used for a mixture of official purposes, although a proposed new library and health centre on the site (designed by Howes and Jackman in 1938) came to nothing. In 1952 it was occupied by a maternity and child welfare clinic and civic defence offices but by 1970 it had been demolished and replaced by flats.

Report by Joanna Smith

NOTES

[1] Quoted in *The Builder* June 3 1882, 691.

[2] *The Builder,* Sept 17 1881,357.

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Hackney Archives Department, measured drawings SN/E BP 2/1-11, SN/E B 97.

The Builder, 25 Sept 1880, 17 Sept 1881, 3 June 1882.

Victoria History of the Counties of England Middlesex vii (London 1985), 200.

GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95832

HACKNEY NGR: TQ 3282 8648

CHURCH STREET

STOKE NEWINGTON MUNICIPAL OFFICES

The complex of buildings that comprise Stoke Newington Municipal Offices were built in 1934-7 to the designs of J Reginald Truelove, the result of a limited competition over which Sir Edwin Lutyens presided. The site to the north of Church Street, between the existing public library to the east and two parish churches to the west, was selected because it satisfied three main criteria specified by the Metropolitan Borough of Stoke Newington. These comprised proximity to the existing library and electricity station, which enabled centralisation of municipal functions; visual amenity - it was close to the two attractive churches - and room for a proposed extension to the library and assembly hall. The council offices were conceived as a separate unit, able to function alone until coupled to the library extension by the connecting link of the assembly hall. Despite this forward planning, the whole scheme was built in one building campaign.

The competition, limited to just 28 applicants, attracted a number of high-profile 'competition men', including Bradshaw Gass and Hope, E.C.P. Monson, and E. Berry Webber. One of the chief reasons for Truelove's success was his mastery of the site conditions through the adoption of a curved façade for the council offices, which turned through a full ninety degrees. In his report on his winning design, he stressed how his scheme

> acknowledges the existence of the two churches by turning the main façade of the offices towards them, which also gives a perfect south-westerly aspect to the committee rooms and main offices. Also, by turning the committee rooms away from the busy main road, the effect would be to achieve a peaceful atmosphere for these important rooms. In addition (and not the least important consideration), was the effect the long simple curved front of the building would have, when closing the tree-lined vista between the churches as viewed from the western part of Church Street.[1]

The construction of the municipal offices necessitated the razing of Church Row (nos. 168-180 Church Street), part of a terrace of eighteenth century houses and gardens.[2] During excavation of the eastern part of the site for the Library extension, foundation walls of a 15th century Manor House were uncovered. Some of the recovered bricks were incorporated in the west outer wall of the assembly hall.[3]

The civic group at Stoke Newington consists of council offices, a rectangular assembly hall to the east and, adjoining this, a library extension that augmented the existing library of 1892 by Bridgman and Goss (enlarged 1904 by Goss).[4] Steel frame construction, clad in long, handmade buff brick, was employed throughout the 1930s elements. The main façade of the council offices, described by *The Builder* as 'a modern variant of English Renaissance'[5], is treated symmetrically, and employs basic classical elements, such as a Portland stone ground floor, dentilled cornice and

giant Doric columns, to present a dignified, if somewhat austere, appearance. The centrepiece of the composition, occupying the mid-point of the curve, is the entrance, designed principally to be used during meetings of the council and important occasions. It is given emphasis by a marble architraved doorcase, bronze double doors, flagpole, and a prominent stone balcony. Two pavilions, each with an ornamental wrought iron balcony, balance this at either end. The eastern of these incorporates what was designed as the 'business' entrance, facing directly onto Church Street. This entrance is now used as the principal entrance. Both this and a third entrance on the north side of the building - the Lordship Terrace entrance - open onto the corridor leading directly to what was originally the rates office. Throughout the building, metal Crittall windows with margin lights in stone architrave surrounds are used.

The assembly hall presents a three-bay frontage to Church Street, set behind four giant Doric columns, which are flanked by end pavilions. Three sets of double doors incorporating ornate ironwork tracery, set between the columns, give access to hall foyer. The plain side and rear nonetheless exhibit interesting brickwork: an unusual variant of Flemish or Flemish garden-wall bond, running header-stretcher-stretcher-header in each course, with the header laid out over the junction of each pair of stretchers. The exterior of the municipal offices and assembly hall are, according to one source, notable for retaining wartime camouflage paint.[6]

The interior layout and design of the council offices exemplify a concern for efficient circulation. On the ground floor were located those departments which had to be the most publicly accessible, including the medical officer of health's department (fronting Church Street), the borough engineer's department (fronting Lordship Terrace), and the borough treasurer's department. These were reached from the two business entrances. The rates office of the borough treasurers office, probably the most publicly visited area, was strategically placed in the centre of the building, equally accessible from either approach.

The centrally positioned ceremonial entrance provided access to the council suite on the first floor via a lobby and entrance hall floored with marble terrazzo. In the entrance hall, a double-return teak stair with a balustrade of wrought iron and silvered bronze rises to the vestibule of the former council chamber. This area, well lit from overhead lunettes, is decorated with pilasters and now adorned with various commemorative boards. The former members rooms were placed at opposite ends of a vestibule and were differentiated according to gender: the male members room made no attempt to hide the square angles and was painted blue, whilst the female members room had rounded angles and was painted green. Both rooms are now used as offices.

The former council chamber, situated directly above the rates office, was originally of double height with a plaster domed ceiling on pendentives, barrel-vaulted sides, moulded, Diocletian windows and Australian walnut panelling. During conversion of the lower part of this space into an open plan office, a false ceiling, supported from a steel framework, was inserted and the chamber seating and fittings were removed. Photographs show the seating to have been a circular arrangement with the mayor's seat backing onto the entrance lobby. This seating, probably by Waring and Gillow[7], was made of Australian walnut with Morocco leather upholstery. The public gallery, which was opposite the mayor's seat, survives unaltered above the suspended ceiling. In addition to the four Diocletian windows, the space is lit by two stained glass windows (depicting the borough coat-of-arms) that overlook the two flanking courtyards.

As Truelove stated, the location of the Mayor's parlour, directly over the ceremonial entrance with a commanding view down Church street, and the adjacent three committee rooms, away from the traffic noise and overlooking the churchyard and Clissold Park, are significant aspects of the building's design. The committee rooms were divided one from another by sliding partitions, enabling the creation of a single large room for ceremonial or reception purposes, a common feature of thirties civic design.[8] Only the northern committee room (No. 3 on Truelove's plan) retains the original tables and chairs; the two southern ones having been converted to offices. All however still retain the original moulded ceilings, cornices and plasterwork. At the north side is an open well stair, from which a roof garden, sheltered on all sides by offices and parapet walls, can be reached. This stair was principally for use by the caretaker, whose quarters were located on the second floor.

The assembly hall survives as the least altered component of the municipal complex, preserving such features as the oak dado, the side wall pilaster and stage proscenium. Described by *The Builder* as a 'general utility hall'[9], it was designed to fulfil a number of functions including public meetings, concerts, lectures, dramatic performances and dances. Such 'all-purpose' halls were typical and the design compromises inherent in attempting to satisfy a number of functions, whilst unavoidable, were nevertheless a source of reproach to some specialists.[10] Given an anticipated 80 per cent use for dancing - a figure based on the experience of other London boroughs - Stoke Newington's assembly hall was biased in this regard and boasted a 67 ft square Canadian maple resilient dance floor carried upon Mortons Patent Valtor Spring system with Locking Gear[11], which enabled the floor to be fixed rigid other uses. The balcony is sited at the south end and faces the stage, under which were sited the artists rooms etc. The changes that have been effected have been entirely decorative as opposed to structural: sadly the original Amulberry and rose curtains, with an astringent motif of crème de menthe[12] have been replaced, and the original lighting appears to have has been replaced in the 1950s or 1960s, and supplemented more recently by fluorescent strip lighting.

The entrance foyer, is notable for the terrazzo floor set in a decorative geometric pattern, and the plate glass doors, which are acid etched along their margins. Directly below this area are the male and female cloakrooms, which retain their parquet floors, metal hangers and wooden counters: subsequent minor alterations include higher handrails to the stairs (presumably to meet LCC standards), the addition of gangway partitions and radiators in the cloakrooms, and the further incandescent lighting in the foyer.

On the north-east side of the assembly hall, to the rear of the library extension, are a smaller hall and a previously existing (late 19th-century) public hall, both of which were envisaged as being let together with, or independently of the main assembly hall, for lectures, receptions etc. The small hall originally had panelled oak walls and an oak floor, but has been re-modelled as kitchens, probably in the late 20th-century.

Following amalgamation of Stoke Newington with the neighbouring metropolitan boroughs of Hackney and Shoreditch in 1965, Hackney Town Hall became the new centre of civic administration with the resulting paring-down of Stoke Newington's functions to that of municipal offices.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 8th July 1998

NOTES

1. 'Competition Result: The Winners Report', *The Builder,* 19 April 1934, 559.

2. *Victoria County History Middlesex vii* (1985), 200.

3. *The Builder*, October 8 1937, 634.

4. English Heritage Survey of Pre War Libraries in London (1992). The 1930s component has recently been brought back into use as a library following a period of closure.

5. *The Builder*, October 8 1937, 634; the General Report to the Metropolitan Council, reporting on Truelove's winning design, remarks 'the character of the English Renaissance has been chosen for the Elevations as affording a dignified treatment in sympathy with the surroundings and associations; the various elements which compose the buildings have been clearly expressed'. (Hackney Archives).

6. DNH, Listed Building List description dated 10 May 1995.

7. Waring & Gillow (1932), Ltd., appear first on the furniture section of *The Architect and Building News* list of sub-contractors and suppliers for the building, presumably a reflection on their importance to the scheme. A firm of this stature, with prior experience of working on municipal building commissions, are more likely to have concerned themselves with the more portentous furniture or fittings.

8. For example, Percy E Thomas, 'The Planning of Municipal Buildings', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 23 February 1935, 476; A Calveley Cotton, *Town Halls* (1936), The Architectural Press, 32.

9. *The Builder*, October 8 1937, 636.

10. A Calveley Cotton, op. cit., 48, for example, saw "the so-called 'all purpose' hall" as "attempting the impossible".

11. Diagrams of this system, along with other drawings of the municipal buildings, are held by the LMA (GLC/AR/BR/19/1756).

12. *Architect and Building News*, 8 October 1937, 42.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 98884

HACKNEY NGR: TQ 3243 8280

CITY ROAD

ST LUKE'S VESTRY HALL (DEMOLISHED)

This Italianate vestry hall of 1865-7 apparently stood on part of the parish workhouse site on the City Road. It was built by the Vestry and Board of Guardians of St Luke to the outline designs of the vestry surveyor, William Christie, who was seemingly too busy to complete the drawings or supervise the construction, these tasks being done by the Westminster architect F. Warburton Stent. The contractor was Mr Sawyer, of Dulwich, and the cost of the two-storey edifice, built of Suffolk brick with Portland Stone detailing, was £6,400. The vestry hall was on the ground floor to the rear, along with the offices, and a stone staircase led to the first floor, were the board room and committee room were located. A basement housed the muniment room, a kitchen, and waiting rooms. In 1900 the vestry was merged into the new Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury, after which the vestry hall was occupied by a series of private companies and professional bodies. During the 1930s the building was home to the Institute of Mining and Metallurgy and the Institute of Mining Engineers but it was demolished c.1986.

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 98881

HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM NGR: TQ 2341 7868

BROOK GREEN ROAD/HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY

HAMMERSMITH TOWN HALL (DEMOLISHED)

The commissioning of this rather grand edifice was marked by dissent from cost-conscious elements within the vestry and opposition from ratepayers. It was only after 'a long discussion' that the vestry initiated a limited competition for the new building in 1893, adopting the designs of J. Henry Richardson the following year. It then took nearly two years to convince opponents of the scheme that it should proceed,[1] and in 1894-5 Richardson produced at least two versions of its plan.[2] The structure that was erected in 1896-7 occupied a central location fronting onto Brook Green Road and Hammersmith Broadway. It was designed in the ornate Italianate manner, a style that had been popular for metropolitan municipal architecture since at least the 1860s but which was soon to pass from fashion. The red-brick and Portland-stone front was dominated by a tower, dividing the façade into two unequal sections. The larger part, with the public hall behind, was chiefly ornmented by a large tablet bearing the arms of Hammersmith Vestry, supported by reclining figures. The ground floor was given over to offices, with strong rooms and 'all the modern conveniences', off a grand octagonal entrance hall and marble-lined corridors.[3] At one end of the building was an impressive staircase, spanning the full width of the building, for access to the galleried public hall. The council chamber, which was also galleried, was given its own staircase and lift. The builders were a local firm, Wimpey and Co., and it was paid for by a £24,000 loan (excluding the cost of fittings).

Proposals for a substantial extension to the town hall in 1915 were never carried out. Instead, Hammersmith Borough Council, the successor to the Vestry, resorted to temporary offices and leased accommodation in nearby buildings. Proposals to rebuild the town hall on this site were made in 1930, but the discussion dragged on for a further another five years, when the council finally decided to opt for another location altogether. With the completion of this new building on King Street in 1939 the old town hall became surplus to requirements. Proposals for its conversion into a restaurant, made by William Clark in 1938, and later a dance hall, in a scheme submitted by Cecil Massey in 1945 for Hammersmith Palais Ltd, came to nothing. By 1962 the building had been renamed 'The Tower' and was occupied by Zonal Films and RCA, who had recording studios here, but it was demolished soon after, swept away in the wholesale redevelopment of central Hammersmith.

Report by Joanna Smith.

NOTES

1 *London*, 22 July1897, 619.

2 LMA, GLC/AR/BR/19/141.

3 *London*, op cit.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95886

HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM NGR: TQ 2270 7850

KING STREET

HAMMERSMITH TOWN HALL

This low, rather austere-looking red-brick town hall was built in 1938-9 to designs by E. Berry Webber. The free-standing rectangular building is faced on all sides by a channelled ground floor, above which is a further three storeys of brickwork, with raked joints, finished by an ornamental brick patterned cornice. A blocky outline, with an emphasis on mass, volume, and subtle detailing, inventively mixing modern and classically derived elements, show a debt to contemporary European public architecture. This hybrid style, aptly characterised by a contemporary critic a 'Swedish-Georgian compromise'[1], was a popular choice for municipal buildings in the 1930s and E. Berry Webber was one of its more successful practitioners, responsible for Dagenham Civic Centre (1936-7) and Southampton Civic Centre (1929-39).

The construction of a new town hall to replace the outdated an outgrown late Victorian building on Brook Green Road/Hammersmith Broadway had been under discussion since 1930.[2] Hammersmith Borough Council had first thought to rebuild on the same site but in 1935 they turned their attention to a piece of land between King Street and the river Thames, bounded to the north by the Great West Road, then under construction. Berry Webber was appointed soon after to prepare a scheme for this site. The building was begun in 1938 and opened the following year, a faster period of construction than initially anticipated, its completion perhaps hastened by the outbreak of war.[3]

In plan the building is a large rectangle with a generous inner courtyard. It is comprised of two independent parts, the town hall proper with all its ancillary spaces taking up the northern end, with the municipal offices, including the civic suite - the council chamber, committee rooms and mayor's parlour- occupying the courtyard ranges to the south. This arrangement allowed for a clear separation of functions and independent access to the various parts. Hammersmith Town Hall is good example of the compact, logical but formal and heirarchical layout that characterised so many inter-war civic buildings. The hall range was set back from King Street, its forecourt intended to serve as both a car park and as a setting for the building's façade, dominated by three large coffered arches. This area was later used for an extension in the 1970s, unfortunately obscuring most of the original elevation. The principal entrance of the council offices was on the river front to the south, the façade stepping up to a central entrance bay, with a double stair (presently redundant following the blocking of this entrance) and a mighty arched recess - its large round-headed window lighting the mayor's parlour on the second floor. The council chamber was placed opposite the parlour, on the quieter side of the building, its back wall canting out into the courtyard. This area provided light and air to the three floors of departmental offices in the flanking ranges, the courtyard walls being of lighter, yellow-coloured brick enlivened with chunky engaged columns.

In the interior all the principal spaces of the building were given a high level of finish. They largely survive in good order. The vast top-lit assembly hall has a stage, flanking by attractively

patterned grilles, but no gallery, presumably thought unnecessary for dancing, the hall's most likely use at this date. Preceding this is a lofty barrel vaulted foyer, partly clad in marble and decorated with murals of riverside scenes – painted by Alfred Daniels and John Titchell, completed in 1956. In the south range, the 'civic suite' is arranged around a handsome top-lit vestibule, which has stylised metal grilles masking an upper level gallery. This space acts as the antechamber to both the mayor's parlour and the council chamber. The grand marble-lined vaulted parlour remains in its original use, having suffered only minor alterations such as the insertion of secondary glazing. The half-octagonal chamber also looks much as it did when first built, retaining its semi-circular fixed seating, recessed mayoral dais, and pair of public galleries with sleek balustrades, all executed in a variety of different woods. There are presently four committee rooms, one on the north side of the courtyard, the others forming a suite of three rooms to the west of the assembly hall, although this may not have been the original arrangement. Perhaps the most surprising feature of the building's interior is the omission of a grand ceremonial stair, a standard feature of town hall design (one of the most notable contemporary examples being at Berry Webber's own Dagenham Civic Centre of 1936-7). Instead it has four substantial open-well staircases, with solid balustrades, at each corner of the building.

Following the amalgamation of the metropolitan boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham in 1965 it was decided to build a substantial extension to the town hall on the garden forecourt. Designed 'in-house' by the Borough Architect's Department under Dennis M. Browne, the six-storey office block was built in 1974-5. It style, which has four projecting uprights to its front and a steeply inclined mansard, made no concessions to the earlier building. The block is raised above a concrete plaza, originally intended to be more of a visual amenity than now, with fountains in the glass-enclosed entrance and the area 'tastefully illuminated and landscaped, perhaps in the style of a Japanese garden, with paving textures and boulders'. [4]

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 11th April 1995

NOTES

[1] The term was coined by C. H. Reilly in his article 'The Town Hall Problem', *Architectural Review*, 728, 1935,113.

[2] See NBR file no: 98881.

[3] The north end of the building suffered some bomb damage in 1940.

[4] Brochure commemorating the Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony of the town hall extension, 1974.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95833

HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM NGR: TQ 2546 7719

FULHAM ROAD/ HARWOOD ROAD

FULHAM TOWN HALL

Of all the London town halls constructed during the Victorian era as a result of the competition system, Fulham Town Hall, built 1888-90, best illustrates the inherent failings of this means of selection, and of ill feeling that invariably accompanied it.[1] The competition, which was formally inaugurated by December 1885 and attracted no less than 63 architects - some of whom submitted alternative designs, resulting in nearly 400 drawings - was plagued by virtually every iniquity symptomatic of 'bad competitions', including vagueness of instructions, insufficiency of funds, delayed notification of results, overruling of the assessor's award by the Vestry, and outright unfairness, jobbery and nepotism. Unsurprisingly the competition attracted liberal criticism from competitors and the architectural press alike, *The Builder* noting that whilst such activities were not uncommon, 'they seem to have found a congenial soil at Fulham, and to have flourished exceedingly'.[2] Much of the problem stemmed from the unrealistic sum stipulated (£20,000), and the awkwardness of the site, but the breadth of imagination and ingenuity of the submitted designs, which covered a wide spectrum of architectural styles, was for the most part exceedingly high. The first choice of premiated design by a Mr Curry, won full support from *The Builder* despite being "so discreditably thrown over by the Vestry".[3] It was a design by George Edward's that instead found favour with the vestry committee, who, despite pressure to appoint an independent professional advisor for >the so-called second competition= were resolute in their own adjudication.[4] By April 1887 a tender by Treasure & Son for the construction of the Fulham Town Hall and offices (which would replace the inadequate, existing premises at Broadway House) was accepted, and the foundation stone was laid on the 10 December 1888. The new building was completed at a total cost of £40,000. Executed in what Edwards described as a 'Classic Renaissance' idiom 'designed with a view to mark the purpose of the building, the proportions being substantial and dignified, with all superfluous ornament carefully avoided', it was built from stocks faced with red brick and red Mansfield dressings, with Portland stone employed for the front façade.[5] *The London Argus* described it some fourteen years later in its short-lived feature on 'The Town Halls of London' as 'one of the best municipal buildings in London'.[6]

George Edwards' design, like Curry's, placed the committee-rooms and all the offices on the ground floor with the large hall and retiring rooms on the first floor. In plan form it was broadly similar, with offices ranged on either side of an axial corridor, and committee rooms at the end, away from the noise of the street. In detail however it differed substantially, placing the principal staircase halfway along the corridor of the main (front) block and the vestry room on the ground floor. The building as executed is also at slight variance with Edwards' drawings published in *The Building News*: chiefly, the front elevation, somewhat unusually, appears to have been upgraded slightly in its level of embellishment to incorporate (amongst other things) exuberant hoods above the first-floor windows to the flanking two-storey wings and the incorporation of sunken panels in the first-floor pilasters of the centre block.[7] The flanking wings were also built higher so that the cornice level ran unbroken across the entire front, and a third front entrance was incorporated on the right-hand wing, balancing that to the left. In

contrast, the magnificently adorned large hall, which survives largely intact, was intended to be even more lavish than it actually is. It was to have boasted a triple-domed ceiling with ornate coffering. This hall was approached by three staircases and could accommodate about 1000 seated people. Boasting 'one of the best floors in London for dancing', the large hall, together with the small hall (retiring room) above the vestry room, provided a valuable source of revenue to the Council when let for dances, dinners, concerts, public meetings etc.[8] The principal staircase leading to this is a lavish, double-return affair with elaborate wrought-iron balusters incorporating leaf and spiral forms, presently highlighted in gold paint. In 1894 the council held a competition for the decoration of both halls, the grand staircase and vestibule - spaces most visible to the paying public - although it is unclear which scheme was finally adopted.

In response to the enormous growth of Fulham in the 1890s, the increasing number of new duties taken up by the council and the growth of existing departments, Fulham Town Hall was extended in 1904-5. This extension, which incorporated a mayor's parlour effectively marked the building's transformation from vestry hall to town hall – a scenario played out across London in response to the 1899 London Government Act. A freehold site in Harwood Road abutting on the back of the town hall was purchased, permitting construction of a substantial building housing new offices and mayor's parlour on the ground floor and committee-rooms, retiring rooms, and concert hall on the first-floor. Designed by borough engineer and surveyor, Francis Wood, this five bay block was executed in a full-blooded Edwardian Baroque. In its level of ornamentation and attention to detail, both inside and out, it provides a fitting continuation of the original work. Most striking are the inlaid terrazzo floors of the entrance vestibule (a floral pattern encircling '1905'), main-stair landings and corridors; Art Nouveau inspired windows (including oval skylights above the landings) and tiles in the mayors parlour and cloakrooms.

The mayors parlour of Fulham is probably the best preserved example for its date in London. The wood panelled walls, adorned with framed photographs of all mayors from 1900-1965. The joinery, and the purpose made wooden furniture including an elaborately carved overmantel above the fireplace, is uncharacteristically 'artistic' for a mayor's parlour – all the more unusual for having been made 'in house' by direct labour.[9] Even the toilets are sumptuously adorned – all together a reflection, perhaps, of Fulham's creative character at that time. The original vestry board room was converted into use as a council chamber at this date, which would have been necessary after with the creation of Fulham Metropolitan Borough in 1900. The semi-circular seating layout in the council chamber is typical of the period; more remarkable is the quality of fittings, including lozenge shaped seats made by 'Curzon', designed to align the councillors towards the mayoral dais.

By the 1930s Fulham Town Hall was once again proving too small, and it was extended to the left of the original Fulham Road block in 1934 by Walter Cave to provide additional offices. Other changes made in the 1930s include uplights inserted in niches in the 1888-90 landing and the large pictorial stained glass window, depicting Erconald, Bishop of London at 'the dawn of the history of Fulham'. The window was designed by Francis H Spear in 1931, and executed by Lowndes & Drury of Fulham. In 1949 a rather drab two storey office block along Harwood Road was built by J Pritchard Lovell. In *c.*1961 plans were drawn up by E.A. MacDonald, Borough Architect, for a proposed five-storey extension to Fulham Road. This block, the basement of which was to have functioned as a civil defence operational control centre for the Fulham area, was never realized despite being granted outline approval – local government reform, culminating in 1965 with the creation of the London Borough of Hammersmith and

Fulham, having changed the agenda.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 4th February 1999

NOTES

1. Hammersmith and Fulham Local History Library, 'On Architectural Competitions In General With Some Reference To One In Particular' by Robert F. Hodges, 1887.

2. *The Builder*, 20 Feb 1886, 295.

3. *Ibid*, 1 May 1886, 638. An eclectically styled building mingling 'Classic pilasters with mullioned windows', this solution submitted by Messrs. Newman & Newman placed the large (Vestry) hall on the first floor of the main frontage facing Fulham Road whilst at the same time overcoming the difficulties in lighting the offices on the ground floor.

4. *Ibid*, 22 May 1887, 762.

5. *The Building News*, 15 Oct 1886.

6. *The London Argus*, 30 Apr 1904, 83.

6. *The Building News* 15 Oct 1886.

7. *London Argus*, 30 Apr 1904, 83.

8. Fulham Borough Council Establishment Committee minutes 1905.

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GREATER LONDON

NBR INDEX NO: 95834

HARINGEY

NGR: TQ 3080 9700

HIGH ROAD

HARINGEY CIVIC CENTRE (FORMERLY WOOD GREEN CIVIC CENTRE)

SUMMARY

This Modernist civic centre, built for Wood Green Borough Council, is one of London's few municipal buildings of the 1950s although it had been planned since the 1930s. Its architects, Sir John Brown, A E Henson and Partners, won a competition in 1938, but this scheme was never realised because of the war. Instead a new design that reflected the changing architectural orthodoxies of the period was built in 1956-8. The original intention was to build a complex of buildings including a library and public hall, grouped around a courtyard, but only the first phase, the council offices, was completed. This comprises a long brick-and-glass range, cloaking a reinforced-concrete and steel frame, set back from the High Road, with a raised rear one-storey wing. After local government reforms in 1965 the building became the main administrative centre for the London Borough of Haringey.

BACKGROUND

From 1890 the local authority at Wood Green, initially a local board succeeded by an urban district council, had occupied a converted building, Earlham Grove House, on Wood Green High Road. This had been extended for a petty sessions court in 1913 but had only limited scope for improvement or further expansion. By the 1930s the building was clearly inadequate for the council's needs. Further impetus may have come from a change in status as the urban district council was replaced by a municipal borough in 1933. Although the decision to build new municipal offices was made in 1935, discussions about what was required and possible sites continued. In 1936 the architect C H James, of James and Bywaters and Rowland Pierce, was commissioned to report on the various options. James firmly rejected any extension to the existing Town Hall, dismissed as 'a waste of money, in that a satisfactory and dignified result can never be obtained'.[1] James and Pierce went so far as to produce a design, a perspective drawing of which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1936.[2] This was a traditional scheme, with a giant portico with square columns supplying the requisite 'dignity' to the main elevation. But instead the council preferred to reuse the site of the existing Town Hall for its new building and initiated an open competition in 1937, with James and Pierce acting as assessors.

The winning scheme by Sir John Brown and AE Henson was less traditional, with a debt to contemporary Scandinavian and Dutch civic architecture in its box-like massing and plain brick elevations. However, it was praised by the assessors for 'its straightforward expression of purpose in plan and external appearance'.[3] The design placed the offices in a long range, dissected by a block containing the entrance hall and council chamber. The horizontality of the main range was off-set by the more vertical emphasis of the entrance and stair block, finished

by a cupola (the competition rules had excluded a tower).[4] Although more functional in appearance, this design was still felt to convey the requisite municipal dignity - the second placed design by Frederick Curtis attracted criticism for being too slavish to continental influences, considered 'not germane to this country's civic character'.[5]

In 1938 the council was granted a loan of £59,954 by the Ministry of Health for the new building but the war broke out before work could commence and the scheme was shelved until the end of hostilities. When discussions recommenced in 1946 it was accepted by the council that the architects could not be held to the prewar design and Brown and Henson were invited to produce new proposals to a revised set of requirements. One change was to the intended site for the new building, which was now to be some distance to the south of the existing Town Hall on land adjoining the Church of St Michael, then occupied by the Fishmongers' and Poulterers' Almshouses. It was hoped that the site, which was purchased in 1948, would allow for extra office accommodation, which could then be rented to Middlesex County Council and various central government departments. An early scheme, shown in a perspective drawing exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1949, included a landmark tower.[6] However, this feature seems to have disappeared by 1950 when the design had to be modified after the government offices were dropped from the brief. Henson's revised scheme had offices, a council chamber, a public hall, a public library and a small hall arranged in interlinked blocks around a courtyard. This design formed the basis of what was built. The intention was that the office range would be joined to a block containing the public hall at the rear of the site. This unrealised element was to have contained a large auditorium and small hall, planned back-to-back, in an elegant hourglass-shape plan. A separate library block would have completed the group, which was to have had a formal landscape including a canal overhung by a terrace housing a sculpture garden. The whole complex was deliberately kept low and horizontal 'to act as a foil for the tall spire of the church'.[7]

Although the design was agreed in 1950 it was five years before central government was in a position to approve the loan of £329,891 for the first phase, as spending on housing and education took first priority in the post-war years. Meanwhile, the imposition of new civil defence responsibilities on local authorities had required some changes to the design, as Wood Green opted to locate its control centre in the basement of the new building (against the advice of the Home Office). Building work finally commenced in 1956, carried out by Messrs Gee, Walker & Slater, whose tender had been £332,226. The council wisely ordered the 70,000 golden-coloured facing bricks and 250 tons of steel it required the preceding year, as delays of up to nine months in the delivery of materials were then the norm. They also commissioned a record of the construction from the St James-at-Bowes Film Unit. The completed building was formally opened on the 15th March 1958.

The latter part of the 1940s and the 1950s was a transitional era in civic architecture, as town hall design moved away the formal planning and traditional styling of the interwar buildings towards a freer approach less tied to historical styles. The hope was for an architecture that emphasised democracy and approachability. A new generation of continental influences were also present, one likely reference for the Wood Green building was Aarhus Town Hall, designed by the Danish architects, Arne Jacobsen and Eric Moller, between 1937 and 1954. But there was little opportunity to explore these new ideas in the immediate post-war period when government spending was directed elsewhere. Therefore, Wood Green is a rare example of post-war civic building in London - its only contemporaries were Barking Town Hall, a pre-war design by H.

Jackson and R. Edmonds completed in 1954-61 in a slightly modified form, and Lewisham Civic Centre, a 1950s scheme of which only the less important office elements were built in 1958-63. Several schemes were devised towards the end of the decade, most notably Sir Basil Spence's design of 1958-9 for Hampstead Borough Council and Lyons, Israel and Ellis's 1959 scheme for Finchley, but these were halted by uncertainty about the outcome of local government reforms. The post-1965 authorities, which were larger than their predecessors, tending to favour megacomplexes, comprised mainly of office accommodation. Although these structures were influenced by the new approaches developed during the 1950s they were on an altogether different scale. Brown and Henson went on during the 1960s to design several important modern civic buildings at Crawley, Walton on Thames and Hinckley.

BULDING DESCRIPTION

The building is in two parts, a block of four storeys with basements, facing Wood Green High Road, and a one-storey wing, raised over a colonnade, to the rear. The whole is faced in 2-inch sand-coloured facing bricks or stone panels, the latter material apparently being used partly to denote status - as it frames the main entrance and is used on the rear wing containing the mayor's parlour. The façade is in two distinct parts, reflecting the functional areas of the building. The south end is formed largely of full-height aluminium-framed glazing, lighting the entrance hall and council chamber beyond. This area is detailed by a deeply projecting canopy over the main entrance supported on square columns, faced in travertine marble. The other main feature is a simple balcony, with a central panel of cast bronze displaying the arms of Wood Green Borough Council, to the first floor. The northern part of the elevation is faced in brick, regularly punctuated by large stone-edged windows, indicating the presence of offices behind. The building's mass is reduced by a recessed upper storey, which is stone faced, and by the sculptural treatment of the service elements on the roof. These include a kidney-shaped service vent, a square water tank and the curved vents from the plenum room.

The other elevations are composed from combinations of these same elements. The north elevation has a single monumental stair window, rising through three storeys, edged by a stone surround. The west elevation is stone faced to the lower two storeys, and nicely detailed with deeply set glass blocks lighting a centre stair. Extending westwards from this block is the raised stone-faced wing housing the civic suite and committee rooms, its concrete frame partly visible through the extensive areas of glazing. The western end of the range has a rather unresolved appearance, with a simple render finish, where it was originally intended to have joined with the public hall block. The raising of the civic suite over a colonnade was partly to signify status but also because it was intended that the whole complex would be linked together by a common floor level, that was adjusted to compensate for the fall of the site to the north.

The treatment of the elevations is one area in which the changes in architectural fashion from the inter war years can be detected. It is most marked, perhaps, in the handling of the entrance on the front elevation, signified in the 1930s design by a grand doorway preceded by steps, replaced in the 1950s by a low-key off-centre doorway entered at street level. Furthermore, the large area of glazing within which it is set make visible the entrance hall and the interior of the council chamber beyond, although the latter has now been supplied with blinds - the monumental having been eschewed in favour of visibility and approachability.

In the arrangement of the building there are echoes of Brown and Henson's pre-war design, for example having the council chamber at one end and using the entrance hall to establish a cross axis. But the layout is less formal and heirarchical, 'softened' to allow different functional areas of the building to overlap one into another. The interior of the building has a strongly sculptural element to its architectural set-pieces, the council chamber and main entrance hall. These are handled in fluid manner with the spaces allowed to flow into one another, most strikingly where the curved gallery of the council chamber swells out into the space of the entrance hall. The hall itself rises through three storeys, interrupted only by a striking helical stair on the ground floor and a 12ft-wide bridge spanning the first floor. The curve of the stair is carried on by a side bridge that curls away to the rear wing containing the civic suite. The wall and floor surfaces are finished with high-status materials, including light creamy-brown marble, and the rails of the stair and bridge are of anodised satin-finish aluminium. The north side of the hall contains large areas of internal glazing, lighting the central corridors of the three floors of offices that lie beyond - a similar feature in Jacobsen and Moller's Aarhus Town Hall is described as 'panopticon corridors'.[8] Even a viewing gallery is provided at the second floor level overlooking the hall. The striking curved stair is another echo of the Danish building, although there it descends to the basement rather than ascending to the first floor. The arrangement of the stair and bridge at Wood Green was essentially a contemporary version of the 'processional route' and 'principal stair', one formal element of tradition town hall design that was retained.

The council chamber is located on the first floor is roofed by 47ft wide portal frames to allow for an uninterrupted span. It is finished with a striking 'dog-leg' suspended ceiling, that steps down in a gentle curve to meet a canopy above the mayor's dais against the north wall. The chamber is amply lit by full-height windows on the east side, supplemented by concealed lighting in the angled screens of the elm-veneered panels to the west wall and in the suspended ceiling. The dais, which is backed with dark marble panels, retains the original purpose-made seating, on two levels, although with later modifications such as the display case for the ceremonial mace. When first built the council decided on a traditional horseshoe arrangement for the members seating in the body of the chamber. However, as a consequence of the 1965 reorganisation and a dramatic increase in the numbers of council members from 24 to 60 the fixed seating was replaced with movable seating. At the north end is a public gallery, supported on two enormous hollow circular columns, one of which serves as a plenum duct and the other as a boiler flue, described at the time as being 'of novel construction'.[9] The area below forms an ante-room to the chamber, in which a small room has been inserted by partitioning an area around the eastern column. A former press room adjoining the west side of the chamber is no longer in use.

The one-storey civic wing has a suite of rooms which are all entered from a corridor on the north side. These were built as the male and female members rooms, the mayor's parlour, a small committee room and two larger committee rooms, separated by a dividing door so as to allow for enlargement into a single room. These functions are etched into the frosted glass panels within the lightweight partition walls that allow natural light to reach the rooms from two sides Only the committee rooms remain in their original use although many original fittings remain, such as the wardrobe units in the robing areas and marble-backed cocktail cabinet in the former mayor's parlour.[10] This was later faithfully copied, apart from the built-in cupboard below, to make a matching pair. The status of this part of the building is signified by the quality of fittings,

which also includes elm-wood panelling to some of the rooms as well as architect-designed dish-shaped uplighters supported by slender curved supports along the corridor. The eastern end of the passageway is narrowed by a curving secondary wall, to allow for a smooth transition between the two blocks; this matches the curve of the side bridge from the entrance hall.

The basement of the building has walls of 24-inch thick reinforced concrete, to conform to Home Office requirements as part of the floor was originally designed as a Civil Defence Control Centre. At this time local authorities were obliged to provide such facilities for use in the event of a nuclear attack.[11] Two escape tunnels leading to the external gardens were also provided. The north passage was also used for food deliveries, despatched via a direct service lift to the canteen on the top floor. Now used for storage, the suite of rooms that made up the control centre retain many of the fittings, including telephonists kiosks and information boards.

The four storeys of the office element of the building were constructed with floors of hollow tiles carried on four steel beams running lengthwise to either side of the central corridor. This avoided the necessity for cross beams and allowed for the free planning of internal partition walls, often made up of in-built cupboards, shelving etc., many of which still remain. However, the opal perspex sheets used for the partition walls of the central corridor have all been replaced by a less transparent but more fireproof material. The top floor was planned with a staff canteen at the north end, still in use, and a caretakers flat to the south, now used for storage. Two west-facing terraces, with views towards Alexandra Palace, were also provided, one of which has been subsequently enclosed to form offices. When newly built it was noted that all the painted surfaces in this part of the building were 'in varying shades of beige except for the canteen, where deep reds have been used; reports from those working in the building confirm that the beige has a very restful effect'.[12]

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 5th June 1998

NOTES

1. Haringey Local Studies Collection. Report by C.H. James on sites for a possible Civic Centre, 5th October 1936, produced for the Public Buildings Special Committee, Wood Green Borough Council.

2. Published in the *Architect and Building News*, May 8th 1936,151.

3. *The Builder*, June 24th 1938, 1237.

4 This was similar in style to the cupola at Friern Barnet Council Offices also designed by Brown and Henson.

5. *The Builder*, June 24th 1938, 1237.

6. Published in the *The Builder*, May 20 1949, 626.

7. *Architect and Building News*, July 2nd 1958, 11.

8. *Aarhus City Hall*, Danish Architectural Press, 1991.

9. *Official Architecture*, June 1958, 262.

10. The mayor now occupies an office space in the main body of the building

11. However, locating it in the basement of the new council offices, although obviously convenient, was against the advice of the Home Office, which recommended such facilities not be placed under buildings.

12. *Official Architecture and Planning*, June 1958, 262.

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GREATER LONDON

NBR NDEX NO: 95835

HARINGEY

NGR: TQ 3020 8835

THE BROADWAY

HORNSEY TOWN HALL

The first town hall in Britain modelled on Willem Dudok's seminal Hilversum Town Hall of 1928-30, Hornsey became, in turn, a highly regarded and influential civic building of 1930s Britain. Reginald Uren's competition-winning design was built in 1933-5 for the resolutely middle-class, Conservative Middlesex borough of Hornsey. It provided, in its asymmetrical cubist massing and distinctive tower, a dramatic statement of corporate identity - a fitting symbol for a borough alarmed by encroaching LCC suburbia. In practical terms it offered the most logical, direct solution to a whole raft of problems detailed in a daunting competition of 1933. Unlike most of the other 218 competitors, who set their buildings round the edge of the narrow, restricted site, Uren placed his skilfully compact design as far back as possible, enabling a narrow forecourt and car park in front, thus keeping the bustle of The Broadway at a quieter distance. The appearance of the building was not specified beyond 'it should rely on good proportions and a fitting architectural setting rather than on elaborate decoration and detail', and 'its character should be dignified'. Uren satisfied both these points, but in a way that radically differed from the English tradition perhaps epitomised by the assessor C. Cowles Voysey – who was by inclination a traditionalist, evidenced by his classical Worthing Town Hall then just completed. The brick L-shaped frontage, hinged around the tower, is the most striking reiteration of Scandinavian and Dutch architecture - particularly Hilversum - and clearly expresses the dual functions of assembly hall and council offices, each with their own distinctive entrances. English precedents are incorporated also however, to temper the continental austerity: carved stonework by the sculptor Arthur Ayres, decorative bronze balconies and an open-work entrance gate. Inside, the central entrance hall with its etched green glass, the double staircase, and the use of high quality materials including Ashburton marble and exotic woods throughout the interior spaces is reminiscent of the simple elegance of Grey Wornum's RIBA headquarters. Soon after completion it was complemented by the electricity showrooms, also designed by Uren in 1937-9, and by the gas showrooms opposite of 1935-7, thus becoming the centre of a composition united in its use of hand made brick and Ayre's architectural sculpture. In recognition of its importance, Hornsey Town Hall was awarded the RIBA bronze medal for London in 1935, and more recently, it became one of the first 1930s buildings to be Listed.

Report by Jonathan Clarke

[This description, taken from *London's Town Halls*, and the following bibliography, is meant to supplement the more comprehensive reports by Elain Harwood and Bridget Cherry].

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 92220**

HARINGEY **NGR: TQ 3365 8936**

TOWN HALL APPROACH ROAD

TOTTENHAM TOWN HALL

The construction of Tottenham Town Hall in 1903-5 was the culmination of over a decade of public agitation for new buildings for Tottenham Local Government Board. In 1893 the issue had reached the stage of a scheme estimated at some £15,000 to £20,000, but discussion at a meeting of the Board at Bruce Castle on 11 January 1894 proved unproductive, largely, it would seem, on account of personal animosity among the members[1]. Following a subsequent enquiry by the Local Government Board, the design was dropped. The transformation of the Board into Tottenham Urban District Council in that year - replete with additional municipal functions - can only have served to exacerbate the problem of inadequate municipal premises. In 1899 – "after nearly ten years of 'talk'"[2]- the scheme was revived, but it was not until 1901, when an amended scheme which included swimming baths made real progress. At an estimated cost of £55,000, exclusive of land purchase, the proposal included a council chamber and committee rooms, swimming baths, fire station, superintendents quarters, cottages for twelve firemen, general depot and coroners court, mortuary and post-mortem chamber.[3]

The Local Board invoked the competition system as a means of selecting an architect for the municipal buildings, baths and fire-station, choosing John MacVicar Anderson as assessor - an architect who vociferously denounced the system[4] and refused to compete, despite having acted as assessor in some ten competitions in the period 1881-1900. Arnold S. Tayler and A.R. Jemmett were the winning entrants, with Lanchester, Stewart, and Rickards (London), and Crouch and Butler (Birmingham) achieving second and third positions respectively. *The Builder* published comment on the three premiated sets as well as those of six others. Favourable in its assessment of Tayler and Jemmet's design, it deemed most praiseworthy the axial arrangement of central municipal buildings balanced by the flanking fire station and public baths, which served to simplify the plan, especially when compared to the other designs which were of 'irregular shape'.[5]

The Council acquired the sites of four large suburban villas - Eaton House, Wilton House, The Ferns, and Hatfield House - for the proposed buildings. Each of these properties had large gardens, and the site extended westwards from what is now Town Hall Approach Road (formerly a Tramway) to the railway line - an area of a little over four acres.[6] This site, facing Tottenham Green, was regarded by the *Builder* as both 'good' and 'spacious', since it provided the necessary distance in front to enable a view of the principal elevation.

On 6 October 1904 the foundation stones of the municipal offices, swimming baths and fire station were laid[7], an event shared with the opening ceremony of the depot at the rear of the site which was designed by the Council's Engineer, M. R. Prescott[8]. On 2 November 1905, Tayler and Jemmet's buildings were declared formally open, an occurrence marked by the unlocking of the main entrance gates with a gold key, by the Chairman of the Council, and by a short description of the buildings by the architects[9]. Less of a cause for celebration however was the

exorbitant financing of the project, which, at a cost of over £70,000, far exceeded the original estimate. Clearly, if one local historian's version of events is accurate, the municipal buildings stood as less a monument of civic pride and more one of monumental public frustration:

> Of all the muddled, reckless, and extravagant schemes ever carried out in Tottenham by a local authority, the Municipal Buildings on the Green stand as a paramount memorial, - this was the view expressed freely by indignant ratepayers not only at protest meetings while the scheme was in progress, but for years after.[10]

In the late 1930s the lack of a public hall was clearly a concern for the Council, as was the inadequacy of the existing municipal buildings to provide accommodation for the growing suite of corporation departments. By 1937 a Town Hall Extension Committee was created - itself a recasting of a former Public Buildings Sub-Committee which had looked at the issue and had appointed H.V. Ashley as advising architect - and, with Ashley still as mentor, carried the proposals forward.[11]

The town hall, forming the centrepiece of the three municipal buildings facing 'The Green', was built as designed, with no obvious departures in either appearance or planning. A two-storey building with attics, it is built in an Edwardian Baroque style, employing English-bond local red brick with Portland-stone bands and dressings. The plan form is of an elongated rectangle, with projecting wings to the front and rear, the former set back from the taller entrance front. The front elevation is fenestrated 1:3:1, with the first floor windows set under flat stone arches and second floor windows set under semi-circular Gibbs-surround arches. Other elements of the Baroque vocabulary are liberally used to exuberant effect, including central Ionic pilasters, Tuscan corner pilasters, urn finials and a cupola to the Welsh slate roof. The two-bay side walls of the projecting front wings are executed in matching style, and it is only the rear half of the building, in yellow brick, that discloses a marked step down in the degree of embellishment.

One of the principal features of the spatial arrangement of the municipal offices, public baths and fire station was their separation by two 10 ft (3m) wide roadways. These served both to enable access to the depot yard at the rear of the site, and Afor the better provision of light and air, and to enable the distinct character of each building to be better expressed on the elevation to >The Green=≅.[12] The design of the municipal offices exemplifies, on the ground floor, a concern for ease of public access to the principal offices of appropriate departments, and on the first floor, a desire to site the council chamber and committee rooms at the front, on account of their perceived importance. In respect of the latter, it is interesting to note that the third premiated design placed these at the rear of the building 'for reasons of quietness'[13] - an unconventional decision for its time, but nevertheless one that would gain almost universal currency by the 1930s. Accordingly, on the ground floor, the entrance hall opened directly onto the general offices of the clerk's and engineer's departments located at the front of the buildings, and on the other side, two parallel corridors connected by a cross corridor run a circuit around the two quadrangular open courts in the rear of the building, which in turn opened directly onto the rates department, medical officer, road surveyor etc.

The entrance hall is especially impressive for its tessellated floor, set in a circular pattern, its open and blind arcading, and the double-return Italianate marble stair with turned balusters and Art Nouveau wrought-iron lanterns. The only changes made to it have been the insertion of partitions within some of the open arcading, probably in the last decade. The first floor landing

is similarly tessellated, and the first floor of the stair hall is also arcaded, with pilasters and cartouches set beneath a modillioned cornice and panelled ceiling. Art Nouveau stained-glass windows light this area of the building.

The council chamber, occupying the central break-front, retains much of its original decorative scheme, although the chamber seating and fittings have been removed – presumably in *c.*1965, when the London Borough of Haringey was created. The first-floor plan as published in *The Builder*[14] shows a conventional semi-circular arrangement, with the mayor's and chief officials' dais backing onto the front wall. The striking, Moorish-style domed plaster ceiling with strapwork patterns survives, as does the panelled wooden dado and frieze with cartouches, each surmounted by a modillioned cornice. A small public gallery, set over the former councillors' retiring room to the north, also remains largely unaltered. This was reached by a set of stairs to the west of the councillors' retiring room, which communicated directly with the ground floor. The councillors' retiring room and the committee room opposite occupied the front projecting wings and were reached either directly from the council chamber or from the stair hall via mosaic-floored vestibules. These rooms were originally heated by fireplaces set into their west walls. Both of these spaces have experienced significant alteration, probably in the 1970s: the former has had its fireplace blocked and a dumbwaiter inserted to the right of this, while the latter has been fitted with an upholstered bar. To the rear of the building were the housekeepers quarters and the chairman's rooms, both of which were heated by fireplaces. All of the original partitions for these spaces appear to survive.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 3rd June 1998

NOTES

1. Fred Fisk, quoting extracts from a report on the meeting by the *Weekly Herald*, notes how AOne member flung a stick about, and subsequently dropped a poker on the fender; another member threatened to pull a colleague's nose. Member's actions were characterised as 'black-guardly', and 'cowardly'. Fred Fisk, *The History of Tottenham, in the county of Middlesex...Collected, compiled and written by F. Fisk.* 2nd ser: Tottenham (1913, 1923), 123.

2. *Ibid.*

3. See Charlotte Bradbeer, *Former Municipal Buildings, Town Hall Approach Road, Haringey*, RCHME Historic Building Report, NBR No. 92220 (November 1993).

4. *RIBA Journal* VII, 9 Apr 1891, 247-9.

5. *The Builder*, 26 December, 1902, 892.

6. Fisk, *op.cit.*

7. Haringey Local History Library (HLHL) holds the commemorative brochure commemorating the laying of the foundation stone, Bruce Castle, Thursday, October the 6th, 1904".

8. An account of the opening, and of the depot buildings is given in *The Tottenham Weekly Herald*, 7 October 1904.

9. Commemorative brochure, 1904.

10. Fisk, *op.cit.*

11. Typescript of speech entitled ATOWN HALL EXTENSION presented to the General Purposes Committee by E Townson on 15 June 1937. HLHL.

12. *The Builder*, 14 Apr 1906, 410.

13. *The Builder*, 26 Dec 1902, 892.

14. *The Builder*, 14 Apr 1906, 410.

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95836**

HARROW **NGR: TQ 155 892**

MILTON ROAD

HARROW CIVIC CENTRE

The design and construction of this centre was a major undertaking, one of a select group of large municipal complexes that sought to centralise council functions and forge new civic identities for the reorganised local authorities created by the 1963 London Government Act. Harrow had long lacked any purpose-built council offices and although proposals had been made from 1930s onwards, none had come near to attainment. One scheme, a design by Verner O. Rees placed first in a competition of 1935-6 assessed by C.H. James and S. Rowland Pierce, was an attractive, asymmetrical block in a mildly Modernist style, reminiscent of Dagenham or Walthamstow town halls. War prevented its realisation. Another project, a design by John Brandon-Jones, who was invited to prepare a scheme of 'deliberately traditional character', was dropped in 1962 following criticism by 'a small but vocal minority of councillors'.[1] Instead the council, aware of the increased responsibilities and status that it would soon assume, launched a national competition in 1964. The brief was for a complex of buildings bringing together the public, administrative, social and ceremonial activities on a large (9 3/4 acres) site at Wealdstone. The hope was for 'a scheme which could satisfy the *avant-garde* without causing offence to the squares' and the winning entry, awarded by the assessors Basil Spence, Hugh Casson and A. Douglas Jones, was a simple but elegant modern design by Eric G. Broughton.[2]

Broughton's scheme comprised five separate elements - an office block, committee rooms and a council chamber, a public library, a staff building and a hall and theatre block - dispersed around the site. The breaking down of the functional elements of such civic complexes into separate units was becoming fashionable in the post-war years, best evidenced perhaps by Basil Spence's unbuilt scheme of 1958-9 for Hampstead Borough Council. At Harrow visual cohesion between the blocks was created by a repetitive elevational treatment, bold vertical profiles in precast concrete, used for all but the council chamber unit.[3] Provision was made for a sixth block (for expansion) and the original intention was that vehicular and pedestrian circulation would be separated, with the approach from the main road being across a raised courtyard concealing a car park beneath. Construction of the first phase of the complex, omitting the hall and theatre block and the elevated 'piazza' and with minor modifications to the other elements, commenced in 1970 and was completed by 1973. The blocks were all constructed with a reinforced-concrete frame, partly cast *in situ* and partly precast. The second phase was never built, a casualty of the economic crisis of the mid 1970s.

The principal unit of the civic centre, as built, is a six-storey office block around a landscaped courtyard. The council chamber is joined to this by a glazed bridge with a detached two-storey library block to the rear. The hard landscaping, in which pedestrian terraces are a key element, is designed to unify these disparate elements. Before the office block is a long pond crossed by bridges, similar to the water feature at Enfield Civic Centre, designed by Broughton in 1957. The low-key main entrance is at the north-east corner of the offices, an amendment of the original

design which had the entrance on the next floor, accessed from the raised forecourt or piazza, as the fenestration of the building still clearly shows.

The unaffected treatment of the elevations is continued inside the complex, the entrance area given extensive glazing and a simple open tread stair. Likewise the council chamber, not built as originally designed, has low-key, but good-quality, finishes. Light-coloured wood is used to line the walls and for the fixed curved seating and mayoral dais. The predominantly beige colour scheme and ample lighting, to the sides and ceiling, create a calm, airy, inward-looking space. The design of Harrow Civic Centre is imbued throughout with a new post-war ideal of civic design, resolutely modern and forward looking, emphasising democracy over dignity and approachability over formality. However, some degree of decoration was still considered appropriate, most notably the magnificent glass screen by Whitefriars Glass adorning the bridge to the council chamber, the fine metal coat of arms in the chamber itself and the 'Kodak Mural', a composite of hundreds of small photographic images, on the upper stair landing.[4]

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 14th August 1998

NOTES

[1] *The Builder*, 28 Aug 1964, 414.

[2] Ibid

[3] A modification of the original intention to have all bocks treated the same. This was done at the request of the council.

[4] The screen was made in 1973, the mural was created in 1974. Both firms had local connections.

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GREATER LONDON/ NBR INDEX NO: 95840

HILLINGDON NGR: TQ 058 839

UXBRIDGE HIGH STREET

HILLINGDON CIVIC CENTRE

Hillingdon Civic Centre, designed in 1970-1 and constructed in phases between 1973 and 1978, represents a bold attempt to break away from the post-war conventions of civic design and express a new municipal identity through distinctive landmark architecture. The commissioning of the building was a direct consequence of the local government reorganisation of 1965. The newly formed London Borough of Hillingdon, created by the amalgamation of four smaller districts, faced the dual problem of implementing a new administrative structure and providing adequate, preferably centralised, accommodation for its staff.[1] The agreed solution was to build a new civic complex, which it was hoped, would reflect the 'new Hillingdon'. A large 8 ½ acre site off Uxbridge High Street, partly occupied by an office building put up by Middlesex County Council in 1940, was selected and in 1970 the architectural firm of Robert Marshall, Johnson-Marshall and Partners was invited to prepare designs, in collaboration with the Borough Architect Thurston Williams. The result, which has been described a as 'formalized hill-village of suburban brick houses clustering around an outsize barn'[2], was the consequence of a year and half of discussions between the architects and a panel of council members. Higgs and Hill Building Ltd started work on the first phase, a four-storey office block, in 1973. This was completed by 1976, after which phase two, the council chamber and committee rooms, was begun, completed in 1978. The last phase, the refurbishment of part of the existing County building as a restaurant and multi-purpose public hall, was executed in a drastically curtailed form, as the overall costs, originally planned at £5.5m, had climbed to between £9m and £14m, driven up by the post-oil crisis inflation of the 1970s. Great claims for the architectural importance and likely influence of Hillingdon were made at the time of its opening in 1978, but the economic and political realities of the following decades have meant that no local government scheme of comparable status or ambition has been attempted since in London. In civic design terms this building should perhaps be seen as an end point rather than the new beginning it was claimed to be.

The council were keen from the start that the new civic centre should be 'a distinctive building for Uxbridge' using traditional materials and reflecting the architectural character of the area.[3] The firm they appointed, Robert Marshall and Johnson-Marshall and Partners, proved sympathetic to these aims - they held to no particular architectural style, preferring to leave the design team to choose the most appropriate approach for the job.[4] For Hillingdon the partner-in-charge was Sir Andrew Derbyshire and the project team was headed by Terence Swales (it has been calculated that 29 architects worked on this project alone). The approach they evolved was to preserve as much of the character of the site as possible, to reduce the external mass of the offices by breaking up its bulk, lifting the civic accommodation above ground level to allow views into the site and using 'familiar and friendly materials (bricks and tiles)' in the suburban idiom of the area.[5] Most post-war civic buildings aspired towards greater accessibility and approachability (one of the aims of Hillingdon was to 'encourage the public to use the site and accept the centre as their own') but this was usually couched in a post-war functional Modernist

aesthetic.[6] But by the 1970s the growing perception was that such architecture, however efficient, failed to inspire affection. So at Uxbridge 'the members and officers of the borough set out with the architects to design a building that spoke a language of form intelligible to its users'.[7] The result was characterised by traditionally detailed red-brick walls and tiled pitched roofs. Despite this traditional garb and some use of load-bearing brick and timber roof trussing, the primary structure of the building is of reinforced concrete, cast in situ, with structural steelwork. The venacular vocabulary of the exterior has no internal equivalent. This was intended as 'friendly' architecture, but not at the expense of functional efficiency or technological innovation.

In layout the centre comprises a large, squarish office block with semi-detached elements, one housing the civic suite and the other incorporating the existing municipal building as a function area. This arrangement was informed by the desire to conserve the existing trees on site as much as the post-war preference for a separation of functional elements.[8] The offices form the single largest component, the council having determined on *Burolandschaft* or landscaped open-plan offices. It was hoped that this would give greater flexibility and encourage integration between the different departments of the restructured administration. Public access to the centre was encouraged through the creation of a open plaza off Uxbridge High Street, leading to the main entrance and the civic areas, which were provided with a separate entrance. The main reception area, preceded by an internal stained-glass window celebrating town-twinning, was provided with a suite of interview rooms thereby avoiding the necessity of having the public enter the office areas, although a proposed exhibition area was never realised. Internal circulation between the offices and the council chamber was routed past the conference and committee rooms to facilitate meetings between the public, council officers and elected members. Unfortunately an irregular, disarticulated layout on this scale does mitigate against straightforward circulation, as well as resulting in some spatially compromised rooms. However, some elements of traditional town hall design are retained in the civic areas. There is a fine curved ceremonial stair, embellished by a hanging sculpture of wooden, bone-like forms, entitled 'Life Continues' by John Phillips. The octagonal council chamber, externally marked by a resited cupola salvaged from a demolished range of the County building, is designed for comfort and good acoustics. There are no internal columns to disrupt the sight lines, the seating arrangement is a mixture of free chairs and fixed desks, and the sky can be glimpsed through openings in the ceiling. Many of these spaces remain much as when they were first completed. In the reused range of the County building, a neo-Georgian style brick and stone building originally of two sections separated by a cruciform link built in 1940, has been simply refurbished for a staff restaurant and function area.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 18th December 1998

NOTES

[1] The four merged authorities were districts councils of Uxbridge, Hayes, Ruislip-Northwood and Yiewsley and West Drayton.

[2] See *Buildings of England London 3: North West*, 359.

[3] Hillingdon Civic Centre Report, RMJM, n.d.

[4] RMJM were also designing a new civic centre, in glass and concrete and in unashamedly modern idiom, for the London Borough of Southwark at the same time as they were designing Hillingdon.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] *Architects Journal* 18 May 1977, 931.

[8] An early metropolitan example of this trend was by Basil Spence's unbuilt scheme for Hampstead of 1958-9.

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO:95841**

HILLINGDON **NGR: TQ 0620 8040**

HIGH STREET, YIEWSLEY

YIEWSLEY TOWN HALL

This modest town hall, designed by A S Soutar, was built in 1930 for Yiewsley and West Drayton Urban District Council on the site of its old council offices. It is a two-storey building, of brick with stone dressings and hipped tiled roofs, in the domestic neo-Georgian style that was *de rigeur* for local government buildings in suburban districts at this date. It supplies the usual elements such as a balcony and clock tower, albeit on a small scale. The building remains in municipal use as offices for the social services department of the London Borough of Hillingdon.

Report by Joanna Smith

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95843

HOUNSLOW NGR: TQ 2052 7833

TURNHAM GREEN

CHISWICK TOWN HALL (FORMERLY VESTRY HALL)

The construction of Chiswick Vestry Hall, like that of other 19th-century vestry halls, represented the transition from makeshift meeting space to purpose built, permanent premises for the meetings of an increasingly powerful local government body. Until the nineteenth century the Vestry held its meetings in St Nicholas Church[1], but following the Chiswick Improvement Act, 1858, it met about twice a month in a variety of different premises, including the Roebuck Public House, Chiswick Hall on Chiswick Mall (until 1868), and the Boys' National School at Turnham Green (until 1873). In 1872 the vestry resolved to embrace the Vestries Act[2] and thus to finance the building of a hall at Turnham Green on land which they purchased in July 1874.[3] The architect appointed for the work was W.J. Trehearne, surveyor to the Chiswick Improvement Commissioners. Completed in 1876 for the comparatively modest sum of £5,400, the vestry hall was described some fourteen years later as 'an elegant stone building', consisting of 'a large hall which is used for meetings, concerts and other entertainments, and suitable offices for the local board, clerk, surveyor and other officers.'[4]

Trehearne designed a typically Italianate vestry hall, in yellow stocks with Bath-stone dressings, its most distinguished feature being the substantial central *porte cochère* to the three-bay façade. The two-storey block was built to a rectangular plan that extended back from Heathfield Terrace through a long, double-height entrance hall to the assembly hall at the rear. The board room was sited at the front of the building overlooking the Green.

Enlargements to the vestry hall were clearly anticipated before Chiswick=s advancement to Urban District Council Status in 1894, for as early as 1887 there was a limited competition for extensions to the vestry hall comprising a new stage for theatrical performances, retiring rooms, conveniences and a hall porter's residence, a minor hall, board room, and fire brigade station. Maurice B Adams, Charles I. Gladman and Arthur Ramsden, surveyor to the local board, each submitted designs. Although Adams' designs which had included 'a complete scheme of warming, lighting, and ventilating the old and new buildings with a special set of plans showing a system of radiators'[5] were selected, they were never executed. Instead, in 1900-1 additions to either side of the vestry hall were built to the designs of Arthur Ramsden, and the enlarged building was reopened as Chiswick Town Hall. These additions created a separate entrance to the hall from Sutton Court Road, flanked by new offices, and the eastern part, facing Heathfield Terrace, was extended by three bays. The work also included a supper room, called the Hogarth Hall, and a marble-lined vestibule, where a bust of Hogarth now sits. During the construction work, the Council utilised nearby Sutton Court as temporary premises.

Many of London's turn-of-the-century town halls, in a changed climate of municipal consciousness that legitimised frank displays of power and prestige, adorned their interiors with costly ornamentation, and Chiswick Town Hall, which already benefited from an impressive assembly hall. Even by the standards of its contemporaries, Chiswick was especially well endowed: the building is almost entirely made up of grand public spaces that combine for a grand

processional route. The top-lit assembly hall of 1876, designed to seat 475 persons (with a generous cast-iron balcony providing an additional 150 seats) is particularly grand, preserving the stage and almost all of the magnificent decor, although the polished oak floor has been replaced in pine. To the east of this, linked by a marble-lined foyer, is a smaller hall (the Devonshire Room), from which a marble staircase (lit from the side and top with stained glass windows) leads the Council Chamber and Committee Room above. The Council Chamber, situated above the Devonshire Room, still retains the oak furnishings and fittings, the public gallery at one end, and decorative open trussed oak roof, all executed in an unusual, somewhat disharmonious tudorbethan style. All of these 1900-1 additions are reached via an imposing tiled and marbled double-height entrance hall complete with imperial staircase.

Confusingly, Arthur Ramsden's work is commemorated in a memorial panel of 1911, situated over the main stair. Although the majority of what appears to be the 1900-1 refurbishment is indeed referred to in a commemorative brochure of that time, the possibility remains that some parts were only completed in identical style as late as 1911, possibly when additional funds were made available.

Chiswick, which had been an urban district from 1896, joined with Brentford in 1927. The consequential increase in its administrative duties presumably precipitated the moves afoot in 1935 to enlarge the town hall which were never executed. Two schemes were prepared by the borough surveyor, the first involving structural alterations to the existing building; both provided for an electricity showroom. The scheme, estimated to cost ,5700 - an amount which brought on a bout of insomnia in one councillor - was presumably shelved because it was financially unjustifiable.

Following the incorporation of Chiswick into the Borough of Hounslow in 1965, the town hall has been used principally as a registry office, rates office and a venue for classes. Currently the Citizens Advice Bureau occupy part of the building.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 13th August 1998

NOTES

1. Clegg, *Chiswick Past* (London, 1995)

2. *V C H, Middlesex vii*, 1982, 87.

3. Elain Harwood, *Chiswick Town Hall* (English Heritage Historians File, April 1994).

4. *Kelly's Directory of Middlesex* (1890), 999.

5. *The Building News*, 24 June 1887, 956.

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95842**

HOUNSLOW **NGR: TQ 1340 7640**

LAMPTON ROAD

HOUNSLOW CIVIC CENTRE

Hounslow Civic Centre was planned from 1963, in anticipation of the impending creation of the London Borough of Hounslow, the site having been earmarked for municipal purposes by the Borough of Heston and Isleworth, one of the soon-to-be-merged authorities. The design of the new civic centre was carried out 'in-house' by a team headed by the Borough Architect, George Trevitt. Municipal architecture in the post-war period was marked by a shift away from the self-conscious dignity of the pre-war town halls, expressed externally in grand façades and dominating ceremonial entrances, to a simpler, less formal, approach that aspired to produce 'a more democratic civic centre that should attract rather than intimidate'.[1] Hounslow Civic Centre is one of a select group of post-war complexes in London built under the influence of these new ideals, commencing with Wood Green Municipal Buildings (1956-8) and concluding with Hillingdon Civic Centre (1973-8). One of the primary concerns at Hounslow, as elsewhere, was to provide sufficient office accommodation - the local authority was one of the largest employers in the district in the 1960s - and its designers turned to the latest in contemporary commercial office architecture for inspiration. The result was the modern, low-rise complex set within the pre-existing landscape of Lampton Park, built in 1972-6 at a total cost of £4,878,288.

The design of the new civic centre matured slowly, only reaching its final form around 1970. The brief was for a building that would serve the needs of the public, the council members and officers as well as being flexible enough to adapt to future reorganisation. Further complications were caused by the closeness of the site to Heathrow airport , restricting the building height and creating a greater demand for efficient sound proofing than was usual. The solution was a building composed of four low-rise pavilions linked by a central block, all constructed with a reinforced concrete frame and a concrete waffle-slab roof, the walls clad with Portland stone panels above a base of engineering brick. Three of the four pavilions were offices, the fourth containing the council chamber and other civic spaces, as well as staff facilities such as a canteen. To achieve the required flexibility and sound proofing it was decided to have *Burolandschaft* or 'landscaped' offices, air-conditioned double-glazed open-plan areas with individual 'work stations', separated by plants and sound absorbing screens. Hounslow was one of the first local authorities in the country to have landscaped offices on this scale, the concept having been developed primarily for commercial buildings; its use was approved after a four day trip to Germany in 1968 to see examples in Mannheim, Stuttgart and Munich.[2] To maximise efficiency these office areas were kept separate from the public areas in the centre block, which acted as the main entrance and reception area, by interview rooms and private offices. Any disputes with the council employees over the open-plan offices, such as happened at Camden in early 1970s, seems to have been avoided by staff consultation during the design process.[3]

Although Hounslow Civic Centre was intended to be an approachable and accessible building it was by no means devoid of civic consciousness. There is a high standard of finish throughout,

with fair-faced brick walls with elm joinery and veneered wall linings, and stainless steel detailing to the stairs, doors and windows. Inevitably, the greatest effort is concentrated on the 'civic' pavilion. At its centre is the self-contained twelve-sided council chamber, expressed externally as a drum above the roof. Its walls are of fair-faced brick with teak veneered wall linings and it has circular fixed seating, with almost no distinction between the members seating and the mayoral 'dais', the intention being to provide 'maximum audibility and a positive sense of participation'.[4] The antechamber has been designed along the same 'landscape' principles as the offices, being a large space that can be subdivided into meetings areas or left open for functions or gatherings. A residual 'processional route' is supplied, comprising a ceremonial entrance and a circular stair, both decorated by a sculptural bark-like corrugated-metal finish to the doors. The committee rooms are strictly functional but the mayor's parlour retains its original fitted modern style furniture and fittings. Completing the concept of the civic centre is a landscaped setting designed by Jakobsen Landscape Architects, carried out in 1976-8 at a cost of £172 000. This mixture of hard and soft landscaping, much of which still survives, includes a hedged car-park, a pebble-and-boulder garden, linear pools, a ha-ha, and contoured mounds. Jakobsen divided the surrounding area in a series of 'polygonal landscape cells' serving different functions, taking as his key the 'clear-cut geometry and quiet dignity compounded of first-class detailing and finishes' of the building itself, to create an integrated whole.[5] Unfortunately, some aspects of the scheme had to be curtailed, as a consequence of the mid-1970s economic crisis.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photographs by Sid Barker
Recorded 14th August 1998

NOTES

[1] Comment made on Sir Basil Spence's unbuilt Hampstead scheme of 1958-9. *The Builder*, 30 January 1959, 218.

[2] A building in Harlow, Essex was also visited. *Middlesex Chronicle*, 24 Feb 1967, 18 October 1968.

[3] See building report on Camden Town Hall, NBR index no: 95815.

[4] *Building*, 25 Feb 1977.

[5] *Concrete Quarterly*, 1978

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95887**

ISLINGTON **NGR: TQ 3134 8258**

ROSEBERY AVENUE

FINSBURY TOWN HALL

SUMMARY

This eclectically styled building, described variously as Flemish Renaissance and Tudor Revival, was built in two stages, 1894-5 and 1899-1900, as the Vestry Hall for Clerkenwell becoming Finsbury Town Hall in 1900 as a consequence of local government reform. The three storey building with basements was erected on a triangular site bounded by Rosebery Avenue, Rosoman Street and Garnault Place. Constructed mainly of red brick, it has elaborate rubbed red brick and Ancaster-stone dressings, and a glazed red brick plinth. The architect was Charles Evans Vaughan, whose design was the winning entry in an architectural competition held by the Vestry in 1893. The interior was remodelled by E.C.P. Monson in 1928 but retains the original richly decorated public hall on the first floor as well as other decoration and fittings.

REPORT

From 1814 the civic administration for the area of St James's, Clerkenwell met in a newly erected Watch House located approximately at the rear corner of the site now occupied by the town hall. As a consequence of the Metropolitan Management Act 1855, which extended the duties and offices of the metropolitan vestries, it was decided to enlarge the building. These alterations were the work of W. P. Griffith, who acted as the Architect to the Clerkenwell Vestry, and apparently included the addition of new stone dressings to the brick exterior. The result, a modest structure with classical detailing, cost £605 6s.7d.

In 1892 the Vestry decided to replace the existing building with more spacious premises on adjoining land, purchased from the London County Council for £6,200 that year. The following year a competition was held and the first premium was awarded by the professional assessor Aston Webb to the designs of Charles Evan Vaughan. The vestry adopted his scheme and in 1894 the foundation stone was laid, the completed building being officially opened by Lord Rosebery in June 1895. The construction of the building was coeval with the completion of Rosebery Avenue, onto which the main entrance faced.[1] The new building cost £16,500 and was constructed by Messrs. Charles Dearing and Son, of Islington. The furnishings cost a further £2,800.

It had originally been the intention to sell the old vestry hall to meet part of the expenditure on the new building, but it was eventually decided to use its site for an extension. This second phase, in erection 1899-1900, provided a new meeting hall known as the 'minor hall' at first-floor level, with a covered stone yard attached to the Surveyors' Department below: the cost was about £6,000. [2] The minor hall was decorated in a florid Baroque style, carried out by 'direct

labour' following a dispute between the contractors, B.E. Nightingale, and the Plasterers' Union. The Vestry used the same architect, Evans Vaughan, for the second phase of the building, although they omitted his proposed tower.[3]

The London Government Act of 1899 altered the way local government was organised and resulted in the creation of the Metropolitan Boroughs, which were aggregates composed of multiples of the original parish units. In 1900 Clerkenwell Vestry was subsumed by the Borough of Finsbury, together with four other parishes. Office space in the new town hall for the combined staff of the former vestries was insufficient and the covered stone yard was taken over for the Medical Officer of Health and the staff of his department. Piecemeal alterations occurred over the following years, the Rate Collectors Office was extended in 1904, allowing for a new refreshment bar above and necessitating a new corridor from the front stair. Alterations to the offices, as well as improvements to the sanitary facilities and the provision of a more commodious Mayor's Parlour were actually in hand at the outbreak of the First World War. The demand for improved accommodation became so pressing that in the 1920s plans for erecting a suite of offices over the council chamber were prepared by H.Austen Hall.[4] However, no action was taken until 1928 when Nos 121-131 Rosebery Avenue, premises on the opposite side of Rosebery Avenue, were purchased for use by the Council. At the same time, the existing accommodation was re-organised: parts of the ground floor were gutted and reconstructed to provide improved office space and a large part of the central courtyard was absorbed. The architect for these alterations was not Austen Hall but E. C. P. Monson, the architect to the Metropolitan Borough of Islington then engaged in designing that authority's new Town Hall in Upper Street built in 1922-9.

A further reorganisation of local government in 1965 led to Finsbury becoming part of the London Borough of Islington. The town hall chosen for the administrative area thus created was the Upper Street building, and the Rosebery Avenue building was declared to be redundant. Since then, it has served dual use as the local registry office and one of the borough's several Social Services 'neighbourhood offices'. The Council Chamber and Public Hall are no longer in use; the licence for the latter to be used for functions expired in 1991 and was not renewed.

Finsbury Town Hall was built in an era of municipal munificence, when such buildings were designed to be grand, uplifting and didactic architecture. However, the fragmented character of London's local government throughout the 19th century had limited the opportunity for such grand displays of civic splendour as were appearing in many British towns during this period. It was only in the last decades of the century that a more consciously civic architecture began to be built in the capital, with the vestry halls at Westminster (Lee & Smith, 1878-82), Chelsea (John Brydon, 1885-7) and Fulham (George Edwards, 1888-1909). This development can be seen in the sequence of buildings erected by Clerkenwell Vestry on this site, commencing with the modest 1814 structure and culminating in the ornate structures of the 1890s.

Finsbury Town Hall is a composite building, the result of two closely dated phases of construction as well as incremental alterations, but it is a stylistically unified one. It occupies a triangular island site with its main entrance on Rosebery Avenue. The elevations are all handled differently, though composed from the same eclectic mix of Baroque and Tudor Revival styles (also described as Flemish Renaissance), and built of red brick with rubbed red brick with Ancaster stone dressings. The off-centre entrance has an Ionic stone surround, with a cast-iron

and glass canopy incorporating lamp standards. Above it is an arched opening with a balustrade, a bracketed clock and a roof lantern. When first built 'Clerkenwell Town Hall' was carved over the entrance but this has been removed, and now Finsbury Town Hall is spelt out in coloured letters in the leaded glass canopy.[5] Another striking element of the elevation is the four giant bowed windows at first floor level. The treatment of the 'corners' is equally dramatic, rounded and ornately detailed, whilst there is extensive figure carving to the return elevations on Rosoman Street and Garnault Place. The irregularity of the site and eclecticism of styling combine effectively to make a picturesque ensemble.

The interior has undergone significant alteration since it was built in 1895. The block facing Rosebery Avenue was the first phase to be built, put up in 1894-5, while the V-shaped range to Rosoman Street and Garnault Place was added in 1899-1900. Offices for the more important officials, such as the town clerk and the borough accountant, faced onto Rosebery Avenue. Many of these rooms still retain decorative plaster ceilings which reflect, in a less ornate way, the Renaissance theme of the exterior. Originally the entrance hall was floored in marble mosaic, with walls clad in marble but it is presently finished by half-height wood panelling and painted walls. The main corridor is partitioned into panels, a flat strip of stylised Renaissance foliage bordering each plain panel. At its north end are the two main stairs, in a side-by-side arrangement, to allow for separate use by the public and vestry. The semi-circular 'vestry' stair rises through all the floors, whilst the 'public' stair serves only the first floor. The application of ornament, including decorative ironwork, stained glass and majolica tiling, to the public stair goes some way to distract from its rather compromised situation. The planning of the ground floor in general lacks the clear logical arrangement that was a feature of the next generation of civic building, although some of its awkwardness is a consequence of the difficulties of the site.[6] Monson's rearrangement in the 1920s could do little to improve the arrangement.

The principal rooms are placed on the first floor The public hall is a large and opulent room, 66ft 6ins by 42ft 6ins, panelled to dado level in walnut and with wall and ceiling decorations in a decidedly Flemish style, involving strapwork, reeded columns, cartouches, and friezes with plasterwork swagging. Electric lighting was provided via bulbs fixed onto metalwork 'branches' held by winged female figures mounted on corbels attached to pilasters along each side of the hall.[7] It is easy to see these figures as forerunners of the stylised female forms of the Art Nouveau movement and they strike a note of modernity in the overall design. The room is of four bays, with a large, twelve-light stone mullioned-and-transomed window, inset with stained glass, to each bay. The floor was of wood strip, sprung for dancing. Framing the raised dais at one end is an elaborate arch, with decorative, emphasised voussoirs, a motif that is used elsewhere in the building, for example in the arch framing the 'mayoral balcony' over the main entrance, and archways giving onto the staircases from the ground-floor corridor. The large decorative plasterwork panel above the dais features the borough coat of arms. Light fittings depend from large circular panels recessed into the ceiling. These panels served as part of the ventilation system, with the turret on the roof above the council chamber acting as the main exhaust outlet serving both major rooms.

The council chamber, separated from the public hall by a lobby, is an apsidally-ended room, originally with fixed seating for the councillors, with a public gallery at the back, raised on columns. The seating has now been removed. The room has a panelled plaster ceiling, with a deeply projecting cornice supported by attached Ionic columns, and a coved frieze with plaster

cartouches. The large round-headed windows have prominent keystones and delicate eared mouldings.

Report by Joanna Smith and Rosalind Woodhouse
Photography by Derek Kendall

NOTES

1. The nearby Holborn Town Hall, Grays Inn Road (Isaacs & Florence, built 1878-80), was also constructed contemporaneously with a road improvement scheme, the creation of Clerkenwell Road.

2. The provision of a council depot as part of a new vestry hall was not unknown, at Holborn Town Hall (1878-80) an even more integrated approach was adopted, with the yard forming the ground floor of one half of the building.

3. It was suggested that the tower might be built in the 'event of Clerkenwell becoming a municipality'. A drawing including the tower was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1898, and published in the *Builder*, January 14th 1899, 44.

4. H. Austen Hall was also working on a proposed extension to Holborn Town Hall, High Holborn in 1920.

5. Shown in the Bedford Lemere photograph BL 13305 taken 1895.

6. Its rather confused planning has equivalents in the arrangement of Westminster Parochial Offices (later Caxton Hall) (Lee & Smith, 1878-92), Fulham Vestry Hall (George Edwards, 1888-1909) and Westminster City Hall (R. Walker, 1890), all buildings that had to fit into awkward sites.

7. A precursor and possible influence may have been the public hall at Holborn Town Hall, Gray's Inn Road (1878-80) which had caryatids on its coved ceiling although it was noted at the time that it was not intended to bear comparison in size which, it was hoped would make it more lettable. See *A Brief Account of the Clerkenwell Town Hall*, 1895.

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95845**

ISLINGTON **NGR: TQ 3171 8423**

UPPER STREET/RICHMOND GROVE

ISLINGTON TOWN HALL

Islington Town Hall belongs to the 1920s, a decade that saw little new civic architecture built in London. Erected in three phases between 1922 and 1930, it is a fully steel-framed building - one of the first town halls in the capital to be so constructed – clad in Portland stone and brick. Architecturally it moves from a 'Wrennaissance' treatment, in the earliest phase, to a simpler neo-Classical idiom in the later stages, a reflection of how pre-World War I stylistic preferences persisted into the 1920s. The architect was E.C.P. Monson, who was also responsible for much of Islington Borough's council housing from 1919, although apparently never directly employed by the authority.[1]

It was in 1920 that the council purchased a large site (136,000 sq ft) off Tyndale Place and appointed Monson to prepare designs for a town hall, municipal buildings and residential flats 'for the working classes'. This building was intended to replace the outgrown Victorian vestry hall on Upper Street.[2] Although the ambitious scheme gained approval the harsh economic realities of the post-war era, underscored by the London County Council's insistence that any new expenditure by the local authorities be kept to an absolute minimum, forced Islington to scale down its proposals and, ultimately, to adopt a phased construction. This was initially limited to putting up a four-storey building on Richmond Grove in 1922-3, built by direct labour for an estimated cost of £74,000. This self-contained block housed the departmental offices, the committee rooms and the mayor's office, and was designed so as to allow for extension.

The anticipated expansion happened in 1925-6 with the construction of a two-storey block - principally accommodating the council chamber and rates hall - and the addition of a single-storey wing to the rear of the existing building. The contractor was George Bollom, and its estimated cost of £130,000, was partly paid for by the sale of the old town hall. Financial constraints also affected this second phase, the Upper Street façade was originally intended to have a tower, and at the opening ceremony in October 1925 it had to be acknowledged that 'the frontage must remain an uncompleted scheme'.[3] Also outstanding was a proposed public hall, intended for a site adjoining the new entrance block on Upper Street. Tyndale Mansions, a group of neo-Georgian style housing blocks also designed by Monson, were built on the remainder of the site in 1925-6.

The town hall achieved its present extent in 1929-30 when the public hall was constructed. Monson produced several designs for this, one proposal of 1927 had the hall at an angle to Upper Street, but a more straightforward layout was ultimately preferred.[4] The final ensemble is determinedly asymmetrical and composite, visually unified by its classical detailing, a continuous cornice line and a stone base (granite to the Upper Street buildings, Portland stone to the Richmond Grove block). The only elevation not to be entirely faced in stone is the earliest phase, which has brown brick and stone dressings.

The interior layout of the building is clear and logical, despite its piecemeal evolution. Planned in the traditional manner it has the usual grand processional route – in this case a weighty marble staircase with fat urn-like balusters leading from the main entrance hall to a domed council chamber on the first floor. The chamber is linked to the other 'civic' spaces in the earlier range - the committee rooms, mayor's parlour etc - by a handsome neo-classical domed corridor recalling Ralph Knott's County Hall. These civic rooms of 1922-3 are finished in a plush domestic neo-Georgian style, with oak panelling,carved chimney pieces and moulded plaster ceilings, and some even retain their original Roman-style light fittings. The almost circular council chamber retains its fixed seating of richly carved polished walnut. Indeed, much of the original character of the building's interior survives, despite the later infilling of the rear area beyond the council chamber, the raising of the rear wing to four storeys and the inevitable minor reordering of some the spaces.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 28th August 1998

NOTES

[1] Monson was also responsible for the remodelling of Finsbury Town Hall, in the adjoining metropolitan borough, in 1928

[2] see Buildings Index file 98883.

[3] Apparently the front façade was 'especially constructed' for the intended tower (*The Islington and Holloway Press*, 17 Oct 1925).

[4] LMA file GLC/AR/BR/19/4150

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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GREATER LONDON **BUILDINGS INDEX NO: 98883**

ISLINGTON **NGR:TQ 3169 8413**

UPPER STREET/FLORENCE STREET

ISLINGTON VESTRY HALL (DEMOLISHED)

Islington Vestry Hall was a rather modest structure of 1858-9 that stood at the junction of Upper Street and Florence Street. It had contentious origins, including a badly administered competition, held in 1857, in which the vestrymen of St Mary, Islington chose not to appoint a professional assessor and set a cost limit of £5,500, considered by *The Builder* to be 'too small: it is doubtful if the accommodation required can be obtained ... in such a shape as the size and importance as the parish calls for'.[1] Moreover, the vestry rejected the competition-winning design of H. E. Cooper in favour of the second placed scheme by Thomas Allom. As the Gothic style had been excluded from the competition, Allom's building was in the eclectic style 'called "Italian" which can be enriched with materials from any and every source'.[2] It was a two-storey building of yellow brick with Portland cement render dressings, with a large Ionic porch and engaged Corinthian columns on its façade. The vestry room was on the first floor at the front, the usual position throughout the 19th century, accessed by 'a noble entrance hall terminating with a commodious staircase'.[3] The growth of municipal business in the parish resulted in a substantial extension to the building in 1878, designed by Arthur Allom, son of the original architect. However, the construction of new council offices by the Metropolitan Borough of Islington in 1922-30 left the former vestry hall (renamed Islington Town Hall in1900) redundant. The building was put up for sale in 1925 and subsequently became an Odeon Cinema, but has been demolished.

Report by Joanna Smith

NOTES

[1] *The Builder*, 17 Oct 1857, 591.

[2] *The Builder*, 16 Jan 1858.

[3] Hackney Archives Department (BW/T/1), Minutes of the Committee for erecting a new Town Hall, 1862.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95846

KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA NGR: TQ 2560 7970

KENSINGTON HIGH STREET

BANK MELLI IRAN (FORMERLY VESTRY HALL)

In 1851-2 a new vestry hall was built for the vestry of St Mary Abbotts, its construction perhaps prompted by the need for appropriate accommodation for the commissioners of the Kensington Improvement Bill of 1851. The architect of the Tudorbethan-style building was Benjamin Broadbridge and the builder was Thomas Corby. Of two storeys, its red-brick façade dressed with stone and embellished by Dutch gables, with Gothic statue niches, and a domed octagonal clock turret, the style of the building may have been intended to recall the older domestic architecture of Kensington such as at Holland House and Campden House. Originally a set of handsome iron railings and gate piers stood in front of the building but these were removed in 1880. On the ground floor were the offices and the galleried vestry hall or boardroom (58ft x 39ft), this space rising through both storeys and apparently ventilated 'through the cornice', whilst on the first floor was a small board room (for the commissioners).[1] The cost of the building was reported in one source as £5000, a large sum incurred by having to prevent 'noxious inhalations' from the ground - the building had been erected on a corner of the burial ground.[2] Repairs were carried out in 1862 but within twenty years of its opening the vestry hall had simply become too small. Proposals for an enlarged vestry hall, a new public hall and improved office accommodation were put forward in 1872-3 but foundered when legal difficulties emerged. Instead, the building was replaced in 1880 with a town hall, built on an adjoining site on the High Street. The vestry hall was then converted for Library use by James Broadbridge, architect to the vestry, used until 1960 when a new library was opened on Phillimore Walk. The building is currently occupied by a bank.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker

NOTES

[1] Hackney Archives, Hackney Town Hall Committee Minutes, 1862 (BW/T/10)

[2] ibid.

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Survey of London, vol xxxvii, North Kensington, (London 1973) 37, 137a.

GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95848

KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA NGR: TQ 2728 7809

CHELSEA TOWN HALL

St Luke's Vestry was probably more fortunate than most in being able to site its new premises on a prime location. William Wilmer Pocock's Italianate building of 1859-60 was erected on a site given by Earl Cadogan in the King's Road, the principal thoroughfare on which the vestry had previously met, albeit in a variety of *ad hoc* hired venues. At a cost of nearly £8000 it was also more costly than most of its London contemporaries, although in form and detailing it was standard to its type: a simple rectangular structure of two storeys (with a basement) enlivened by a balustraded parapet and central stone porch. Perhaps the most distinctive – although not unique - feature was its dual functioning for both parochial and didactic purposes: the eastern rooms served as a literary and scientific institution, whilst those rooms to the west of the axial corridor functioned as parochial spaces. A large lecture theatre, 65ft long by 40ft wide, may have doubled-up as a public hall.

For the *Illustrated London News*, the building reflected 'much credit' on both Pocock and the contractors, Messrs. Piper and Son. Only 22 years later, the exact opposite was deemed to be true for the *West Middlesex Advertiser*, when the hall proved to be structurally unsound, reflecting 'discredit on both the architect and builder'. Although the works committee, in seeking 'larger and handsomer'[1] premises, recommended that three named architects should e invited to submit designs, the vestry instead opted for an open competition. This contest of 1884-5 attracted 52 designs, and was assessed by one of the competitors, Henry Arthur Hunt, an unorthodox arrangement perhaps explained by the fact that Hunt was surveyor to the Cadogan Estate, which provided the land for the building. For *The Builder*, professional snobbery rather than potential impartiality was the main cause of concern: 'they [the competing architects] look for the appointment of an architect of high standing, not of a surveyor'[2] Despite this, Hunt's recommendations were approved, and the winning contestants were revealed in April 1885 as John McKean Brydon (1st Premium); William Leek (2nd) and Newman and Newman (3rd). Brydon's scheme, comprising a large main hall flanked by two lower wings, set the main elevations fronting onto Manor Gardens rather than the King's Road.

Chelsea Town Hall was opened on 12 January 1887. At a total cost of £23,692 it hugely exceeded the accepted tender of £14,944 by local builder Charles Wall, but the plaudits it received in the architectural press was surely fitting testimony to money well spent. *The Builder* remarked of this 'beautiful work': '..the luxuriance of the style, the freedom and fancy of its ornaments, and the way in which it in every part seems to laugh at all rule and constraint, make it far more appropriate for a building like a modern "town hall," to be used, we imagine, among other things, for banquets, balls, concerts, and such frivolities, than for a church'. Inside and outside, this brick and stone building was sumptuously adorned in a style then more typically associated with Wrens 17th-century churches: the vestry hall with its pedimented centre and the council chamber and committee rooms, occupying the flanking wings, lit by Venetian windows. A more direct influence was probably Wren's Chelsea Hospital (1682-91), which comprised a dominating centre block and lower side wings, executed in brick with Portland stone dressings.[3] The interior of the vestry hall - illuminated by circular attic windows with putti and swags - still retains the elaborately moulded and carved walnut dado, and the grouped pilasters and paired

columns of Devonshire marble. In 1911 this space was further enriched by large wall paintings depicting 'Chelsea celebrities': the artists, Charles Sims, Frank O. Salisbury, Mary Sargent and George Woolway were chosen in competition.

The main hall was extended again in 1904-7 to the competition winning designs of Leonard Stokes (a close friend of Brydon's), the first hall of 1859-60 being pulled down in the process. Also in red brick and stone, this two-storey building with two grand end pavilions incorporating giant Roman Ionic columns, embellished with architraves, aprons and cornices, harmonises extremely well with Brydon's work. The domes originally intended at each end of the façade were never built. A long passage lit by saucer domes linked the Victorian and Edwardian parts of the grand edifice. The total cost for Stokes' scheme came to some £35,000 - considerably more than the estimated cost of £17,7041. The building was refurbished by Roderick Ham & Partners in 1978 - the Stokes wing being converted to a library - and further interior decoration was added in 1989.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 22nd September 1998

NOTES

1. *The Builder*, 22 Sept 1883, 400.

2. *The Builder*, 14 Mar 1885, 366.

3. Brydon was one of the leaders of a campaign for a return to an English Classicism derived from the architecture of Sir Christopher Wren and James Gibbs, to answer the perceived need for a 'truly British style as the British Empire approached its zenith of power and prosperity'. Alastair Service, Edwardian Architecture (London, 1977), 13. This style became one of the main strands of what has come to be known as Edwardian Baroque.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95847

KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA NGR: TQ 2538 7968

PHILLIMORE WALK

CIVIC CENTRE

This prestigious 1970s complex represents one of the most ambitious attempts to reinvent the traditional town hall in a late-20th-century idiom. Its architect, Sir Basil Spence, was appointed in 1965 to fulfill intentions to build a civic centre on the site that predated the local government reforms of that year. Spence's design, one of his last before his death in1976, was approved in 1971 and built in 1972-7, completed and overseen by his former partner John S. Bonnington. The structural engineering was done by Ove Arup and Partners and the general contractor was Taylor Woodrow Construction Ltd. Spence's complex comprises a loosely arranged courtyard grouping of different functional elements each of no more than four storeys in height. The predominant facing material is red brick, used to clad a reinforced concrete frame as well for the paving of the courtyard terrace and steps. Its unashamed modernity and spatial complexity are typical of Spence's approach to civic architecture, which he had previously characterised as wanting to 'take some of the starch out of Town Halls'.[1] Built for an affluent local authority (chronic inflation saw its costs spiral from an estimate of £3 million to a final total of £13 ½ million) Kensington and Chelsea Civic Centre, is in many respects the grandest of all of London's completed post-war municipal buildings.

When the metropolitan boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea were merged in 1965, the new authority inherited two town halls, neither of which was deemed adequate for the expanded administration. Kensington had initiated a scheme in the 1930s for a new town hall and central library, halted by the outbreak of war, but revived in 1946 for another site, a block of land bounded by Campden Hill Road, Holland Street, Hornton Street and Phillimore Walk. The first stage of their scheme, a new central library designed by Vincent Harris in a neo-Georgian manner, was built at the south end of the site in 1955-60, but any further work was delayed by the impending reorganisation of London government. The new authority decided to press ahead with the town hall, but their choice of architect reflected a different approach, as Harris's traditionalism was swapped for the Modernism of Spence.

A low-rise courtyard plan was chosen because it respected the height of the adjacent buildings and allowed for the retention of three existing mature trees, as well as a commemorative tree planted by Baroness Churchill in 1967. To accomplish this an inner diaphragm wall was constructed around the area to be retained, to the depth of the basement, which has three levels including car parking. The ground level was then given a reinforced-concrete slab, brick paved throughout, with four levels of building above, the uppermost containing the ventilation and plant. The brick cladding was chosen to harmonise with the surrounding buildings. Above a mansard roof is faced with zinc sheeting. Offices occupy three sides of the courtyard, stepped out at each level to avoid too dense a massing. The fourth wing houses the committee rooms and mayoral suite. Projecting out from either end of this range are a hexagonal council chamber and a large hall. The different functional areas are expressed externally, the walls of the hall block

being of blank brickwork, those of the council chamber articulated by projected concrete 'fins', whilst the committee rooms and mayoral suite have tall paired chamfered windows. Access through the site is encouraged by raising the committee-room block on piers to form an entrance passage, with foyers to either side for the great hall and the civic suite respectively, lit throughout by a dense grid of ceiling lights. One of the sites visual amenities, a pool beneath the raised council chamber block, is no longer maintained as such, but the planting within and around the complex has matured, acting to soften the mass of the building.

The use of clever detailing and high quality finishes also characterises the interior of the building. A ceremonial route is supplied, with a grand open-well stair, its half landings unsupported save by the stair flights, leading to the council chamber and mayoral suite. The council chamber, faced with timber panelling to the walls and ceiling, of various types including sweet chestnut and cedar of Lebanon, is dominated by a monumental coat of arms, carved in Portland stone, behind the mayoral dais. The striking fibreglass sculpture-cum-chandelier is on a similar scale. But the post-war preference for a more democratic, less hierarchical type of chamber, is recognised by having the entrance and circulation at the same level as the mayoral 'dais', which is treated little differently than the members seating. The mayoral suite was extensively refurbished in 1998 in a more traditional manner, although it retains its original wooden panelling and octagonal lobby with built-in display cases. The other internal set-piece is the Great Hall, a large octagonal space faced in brick with a striking 'diagrid' ceiling, formed by cladding the structural steelwork spaceframe with fibrous plaster panels. Dominating the back wall behind the modest platform is a monumental relief, depicting three crowns and a mitre, in brick. A gallery cantilevers from the opposite wall, with two tiers of boxes stepping down the eastern wall. A small hall and buffet area were also provided, Kensington and Chelsea being the only post-1965 civic complex to have included such facilities in a completed building; several more were intended but fell victims to the post-oil crisis inflation.[2] Like its contemporaries at Hounslow and Hillingdon, open-plan offices were the preference for the administrative elements of the civic centre.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 8th September 1998

NOTES

[1] Said about his largely unbuilt 1958 Hampstead scheme, *The Builder*, 30 Jan 1959, 218.

[2] Civic centres where a town hall was intended but never built include Harrow, Enfield, Sutton and Bexley.

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 98885**

KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA **NGR: TQ 2558 7963**

KENSINGTON HIGH STREET

KENSINGTON TOWN HALL (DEMOLISHED)

This Italianate town hall of 1878-80 was the result of a mismanaged competition held in 1876. Kensington Vestry had originally hoped to be able to enlarge the existing vestry hall, built in 1851-2, but when this proved impossible it opted for a new building on an adjoining site. The competition rules proscribed the use 'Gothic or Elizabethan' for the new building, the latter being the style of the earlier edifice, the reason being, supposed *The Builder*, 'that the Vestry desire a palatial structure with Classic orders as their *beau ideal* of a vestry-hall'.[1] Although the services of a professional assessor, Mr John Whichcord, were used, his recommendations were not adopted. Instead the vestry preferred the designs of Robert Walker, although his proposal, like all the other selected entries, could clearly not be carried out for the £18,000 stipulated in the terms of the competition. Walker's scheme was modified after the purchase of additional property allowed for the building to be enlarged. Construction commenced in 1878 and was completed in 1880, the builders were Braid and Co. and the eventual cost of the building (excluding the site) was £30,549.[2]

Kensington Town Hall's front façade, clad in Portland stone with a central pediment carried by engaged Corinthian columns, was well described at the time as being 'in good taste, but presenting nothing remarkable'.[3] The preference for an Italianate manner reflected the dominance of the style in the 1860s and 1870s for such buildings. Its planning received greater praise, 'compact and well arranged' with a central vestibule, a large committee room on the ground floor (later the council chamber) at the rear of the building, and a suite of large rooms on the first floor including a large galleried public hall occupying the entire front and further committee rooms behind.[4] In 1883 a sum was set aside for decorating the hall, stair hall, committee rooms and the council chamber, although such cosmetic alterations failed to tackle the defective acoustics of the committee and council chamber: one member optimistically made the suggestion that 'one way to improve the sound would be for gentlemen to talk less'.[5] In 1899 a large extension was built, in anticipation of the local government reforms and the establishment of a new metropolitan borough in Kensington. These additions at the rear of the building, designed by W. Weaver, surveyor to the Vestry, and William G. Hunt, included additional offices, another committee room and a new coroner's court.

The decision to build a new modern civic centre on another site predated the local government reforms of 1965, the first completed part being Vincent Harris's central library of 1960. The intention to rebuild the town hall was confirmed by the newly created London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. After Sir Basil Spence's new civic centre opened in 1977 the old building was put up for sale and redevelopment. In 1982 the council controversially began demolition in the face of an impending conservation order. The shell of the building remained

standing for a further two years whilst attempts were made at salvaging what remained, but it was finally pulled down in 1984.

Report by Joanna Smith

NOTES

[1] *The Builder*, April 28 1877.

[2] *Survey of London*, xxxvii, 1973,38.

[3] *The Builder*, 28 April 1877

[4] ibid

[5] *The Builder* 28 July 1883.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95849

KINGSTON UPON THAMES NGR: TQ 1790 6922

HIGH STREET

KINGSTON GUILDHALL

Long-standing ambitions to replace the old municipal offices and courts with a purpose-built edifice designed for municipal purposes were finally realized in 1933 when Maurice E. Webb, son of Sir Aston Webb, was appointed to prepare a scheme for consideration by the council. The old building, a mansion of 1811 named 'Clattern House', had proved increasingly inadequate in housing the civic and administrative needs of a modernising local government body: indeed, many branches of the council were scattered elsewhere in the borough. Webb prepared three alternative sketch plans, and the town hall sub committee, having inspected 'certain [other] Municipal Offices of recent construction'[1], selected the distinctive D-shaped design that now stands on the site of old building which was demolished to make way for its successor. At a total cost of £130,000, The Guildhall was executed for some £20,000 under the anticipated budget.

Built in 1934-5, the new Guildhall was conceived in the prevalent neo-Georgian style of the day, in red brick with Portland stone dressings. The semi-circular front elevation has a massive square tower that lends it immediate visual impact, and well-executed sculptural references to the Thames serve to enliven its appearance and character. The rear elevation - the straight side of the D-shaped plan - is simple yet effective, punctuated by tall semi-circular windows that light the council suite. The internal arrangement of the building is similarly straightforward: from the main entrance under the tower, the principal staircase leads direct to a large suite of committee rooms and the council chamber on the first or principal floor. The three committee rooms, divided by vertically sliding partitions which disappear through the floor were designed to enable a multipurpose space: retracted, they create a large public hall, provided with a gallery at one end. The sprung floor enabled the space to be used for dancing as well as meetings, concerts etc. In the mayor's parlour, Webb introduced one isolated concession to modernism: a large wall-mirror divided into squares. The departmental offices, arranged mainly round the semi-circular part, could all be approached from separate entrances and staircases on the east and west sides in addition to the principal entrance. These offices were supplemented in the 1970s and 1980s by Guildhalls One and Two. The lower ground floor on the rear range provided accommodation for law courts). Throughout, the interior boasts high quality materials, many from the Empire, which combine to serene, elegant effect: the staircase hall, paved with Travertine, bordered and punctuated with bands of dark green slate, its walls lined with polished Portland stone and its window-grilles and balustrades in wrought metal being a particularly fine example. Similarly, liberal use of exotic woods - Tasmanian Myrtle, Australian Jarrah, Macassar ebony, Australian silky oak and British Columbian pine - for the joinery reinforce notions of dignified opulence and grandeur.

The decision to build the essentially modernist Guildhall One and unemphatically post-modern Guildhall Two, isolated to either side of the rear of Webb's building, has fortunately preserved its

formal impact, creating a visually and spatially coherent municipal ensemble. The centralization of institutional functions on this site has been further reinforced even more recently by the construction of a low-slung, red-brick county court. A proposed fire station on the east side of the Guildhall - part of Webb's original scheme, but deferred at the time, presumably for reasons of expenditure - remains unexecuted.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 11th September 1998

NOTES

1. 'The Portals of the Guildhall' souvenir brochure of the opening of the Guildhall on 3 July 1935 (Kingston Local Studies Library).

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95850

LAMBETH NGR: TQ 3125 7811

KENNINGTON ROAD

THE OLD TOWN HALL (FORMERLY LAMBETH VESTRY HALL)

This modest classical vestry hall, one of the oldest surviving in south London, was put up in 1852-3, thereby predating the 1855 Metropolitan Management Act, which reformed the structure of local government in the capital. Its construction was only approved after a vigorous debate by the vestry of St Mary Lambeth, including a poll of the ratepayers. An island site in Kennington was leased from the Duchy of Cornwall and £4000 borrowed to finance the building. The architects were R.Willshire and R.Parris and the structure they designed was, by the standards of the day, of a respectable size and imposing appearance. A spacious apsidal-ended vestry hall was provided, flanked by offices and a committee room, in a single-storey brick and stucco building (with basements), raised to the centre, where a pedimented Tuscan portico had upper windows lighting the gallery of the vestry hall.[1] But as Lambeth became more developed and the duties of local government increased the shortcomings of the building, most particularly the lack of office space, became evident. As a result the outer bays were raised a storey and partly extended at the rear, probably in 1872-3. Some internal reordering occurred to allow for the stairs to the first floor, whilst the extra storey reduced the external dominance of the front portico. Despite these additions the vestry was immediately complaining that 'in consequence of the rapidly increasing population of the parish, which covers an unusually large area, an entirely new building will shortly have to be erected in a more central position'.[2] But it was the passing of the London Government Act in 1899 that forced the successor to the vestry, the Metropolitan Borough of Lambeth, to act. After a replacement town hall on Brixton Hill was opened in 1908 the old vestry hall was occupied for time by the Church of England Children's Society. The building was fully refurbished for office use in 1994-5 by architects Rolfe Judd.

Report by Joanna Smith

NOTES

[1] For the original plan see the application to the Metropolitan Buildings Office (MBO/30), for the exterior see the illustration held at the Lambeth Archives Department (SP 13/794/1).

[2] *The Builder*, 25 Oct 1873, 852.

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95851**

LAMBETH **NGR: TQ 3095 7523**

BRIXTON HILL

LAMBETH TOWN HALL

SUMMARY

Lambeth Town Hall was built for the Metropolitan Borough of Lambeth in 1906-8 to competition-winning designs by Septimus Warwick and Herbert Austen Hall to house the Borough's offices and civic suite. An always intended Assembly Hall was not added until 1935-8, to new designs by Hall and Warwick, at which time the original building was raised a storey and further extended. The original Baroque Revival building occupies a prominent triangular site, exploited in an A plan that points into Brixton with an assertive tower at its apex. Externally red brick and Portland stone with lively elevations, the tower is dominant. Internally the building is distinguished by the subtle ingenuity and of its planning, which successfully integrates the split functions, as well as by the Baroque enrichment of its ceremonial spaces. The processional route from the north entrance up the principal staircase to the first-floor civic suite is dramatically conceived and lavishly embellished. The Council Chamber, in the quiet and well-lit cross bar of the A, is perhaps reordered in its seating. It retains its original saucer dome on a double-apsed quincunx, centralizing a rectangular room. The Assembly Hall adopted a quieter classical style that, in its external elevations and internal details, steps into Art Deco in a modest manner.

REPORT

Lambeth Town Hall was built for the Metropolitan Borough of Lambeth in 1906-8 to designs by Septimus Warwick (1881-1953) and Herbert Austen Hall (1881-1968), winners of an architectural competition assessed by Henry T. Hare. Following the formation of the Borough in 1900, adaptation of the former Lambeth Vestry Hall on Kennington Road was considered, but the small building was quickly found wanting. Land for a new building was compulsorily purchased in 1902-3, the site being at the south end of Brixton High Street and to the west of the Church of St Matthew, a large triangular wedge bounded by Brixton Hill to the east and Acre Lane to the northwest. The first phase of the project was Lambeth Municipal Buildings, that is the Borough's offices and its civic suite, including a Council Chamber; the 'town hall' proper (Assembly Hall) was to follow on, and was not incorporated in the competition designs which were held to a £35,000 limit. The open competition was mounted in 1904 and attracted 143 entries, publicly exhibited and assessed in May 1905. This was a prominent and high-profile architectural opportunity; many of the designs appear to have been of a high standard. Warwick and Hall's English Baroque scheme with a corner tower and entrance (deliberately close to the station) was an acclaimed winner that made much of the triangular site and its directionality, deliberately leaving room at the rear. The second premiated design

was by H. P. Burke Downing who proposed a more staid French Baroque building, with a central entrance and dome on Brixton Hill, spurning the opportunity presented by the wedge shape, as well as omitting a clock tower, 'of no public utility' in his view given the proximity of the church tower. The third-placed design was by Messrs Crouch, Butler & Savage. Other submissions, by Butler Wilson, Oglesby & Herbert Davis, H. V. Ashley & Winton Newman, and Arthur J. Gale, were also published.[1] The general contractors for the building were John Greenwood Ltd, and the foundation stone was laid on 21 July 1906. The building, the final cost of which was £48,000, was opened on 29 April 1908 by the Prince and Princess of Wales (later King George V and Queen Mary), with Mayor (Sir) Charles Henry Gibbs.

The Assembly Hall to the rear (southwest) was projected from 1904 - an early perspective by Warwick and Hall includes a massive domed block with four corner turrets, but it was deferred from the off.[2] In 1919 Hall prepared a revised scheme with a bigger dome for what was then designated a War Memorial Hall.[3] It evidently took time before 'a measure of agreement was reached'.[4] The hall was reduced in scale and made part of other additions. Lambeth Town Hall Extension was built in 1935-8 to plans by Hall (now a partner of Whinney, Son and Austen Hall), again teaming up with Septimus Warwick; E. R. Silver was the assistant architect in charge of the work, and the builders were Prestige and Company. Opened by HM Queen Mary on 14 Oct. 1938 the Assembly Hall was designed to accommodate 500 and was linked to the earlier building with new office accommodation behind the Brixton Hill range and a basement Juvenile Court Room. An attic storey was added to the Edwardian building, discreetly set back behind balustraded parapets, so that its existence is easily overlooked.[5] There have been subsequent alterations, notably in 1961-3 and in the late 1980s. By the latter date the Town Hall had been Listed, and alterations carried out without Listed Building Consent were condemned by English Heritage as unsuitable.[6] Even so the early-20th-century building remains largely as designed.

The building of 1906-8 has what is essentially an A plan, pointing north to Brixton, with the Council Chamber as the cross bar. It was low slung, its striking north tower excepted, two storeys with a basement in two long ranges, all in red brick and Portland stone on a granite plinth. The north end or apex of the triangle is a rusticated pavilion with a projecting semi-circular termination carrying paired Ionic pilasters on a high plinth. At the head of the main entrance here are Lambeth's arms. The 134ft- (41m)-tall square brick tower rises behind with heavy stone quoining. The upper clock and bell stage has 6ft- (1.8m)-diameter clock faces and, at the angles, sculpted allegorical figures representing Justice, Science, Art and Literature, 'as hardly one passer-by in a hundred thousand will have the wish to work out for himself'.[7] Buttresses and scrolls rise to a finial in bouffant stone. An early drawing for the tower had even more elaboration.[8] The clock and chimes were presented by Edwin Jones in 1909.

The Brixton Hill elevation is long, grand and Ionic - 17 bays symmetrically arranged in a 1:6:3:6:1 rhythm around a central entrance. There is vertical enrichment to every window bay, and replacement glazing. The three-bay centrepiece is nicely composed in stone with distyle-in-antis columns allowing a recess for a mayor's balcony that has an ornate wrought-iron railing. The Acre Lane elevation is less pure, though it sets off for seven bays from the north as to Brixton Hill. Beyond an entrance is in the first bay of what appears as a 1:3:1-bay three-storey section that lacks Baroque detailing. These bays are not in line with the elevation as published in 1905, though four bays and the upper storey here do appear in plans

published in 1906, and are thus evidently original; the fifth bay was in fact part of the 1930s extension.[9] It would appear that the elevational design of this section was altered in 1905-6 and left to tail off asymetrically, presumably in anticipation of later extension.

Internally Lambeth Town Hall is distinguished both by the enrichment of its civic spaces and by the ingenuity of its planning. Office and ceremonial use are interwoven and interdependent with carefully considered circulation arrangements. There is a formal processional route from the main north entrance to the upper-storey civic suite where lavish architectural finish is concentrated. Across and alongside this there is more utilitarian access both to runs of offices along the outer sides of both main ranges and to the Council Chamber at the heart of the building. Fire-resistant construction was specified, of which no evidence has been seen.

Inside the main entrance there is a circular vestibule with a twelve-point dial pattern in the floor, made up of Belgian black, Sicilian white and Siberian green marbles. The space has been compromised by the late 1980s insertion of revolving doors. Side doors originally led to telephone and porter's rooms. Ionic columns frame steps up to an intermediate landing under the tower. In an imaginative resolution of aesthetics and structural necessity opposed stairs sweep up to either side between substantial masonry piers. Ahead a circular inner hall has a Doric colonnade and more marble flooring. Originally this gave access only to two vaulted corridors off which offices were arrayed. Latterly it has led to a central single-storey reception area, built in a former light well, externally lined with white-glazed brick.

Returning to the grand processional route and the paired staircases under the tower there are steps of white Sicilian marble with green Cippolino marble dados in mirror-image cut panels, capped in darker marble. The route doubles back and reunifies unexpectedly in a spacious domed circular landing over the entrance vestibule. This is a lavishly embellished show space with views over Brixton. The architectural effect here is full-bloodedly Baroque, with much play on curved form, both in surfaces and in ornamental details. There is another twelve-point dial patterned polychrome marble floor, and rich plasterwork incorporates coats of arms, swags, drops and cherubs' heads. In three upper round windows there is armorial glass from 1925 by James Powell and Sons (Whitefriars) Ltd, commemorating Alderman Sir Charles Henry Gibbs, six times mayor. More stained glass was put into the upper panes of the central window below by John Hayward in 1975, in memory of Alderman W. H. A. Porter.[10]

A convex flight of white-marble steps leads up to another circular inner hall with a Doric colonnade. The south window here holds a 1922 stained-glass war memorial with a figure of St George, also made by Powell and Sons.[11] Again the route branches down two vaulted corridors leading to what was designed as, and in large measure remains, the civic suite, committee rooms and the Council Chamber, on the first or principal floor.

There are more simply functional secondary staircases. That to the east from Brixton Hill is the grander, with an open well and iron balustrading. An attic-level Diocletian window is flanked by columns- in-antis internally, cleverly supported by the external Ionic columns of the mayor's balcony. The west or Acre Lane staircase rises in dogleg flights with a chunky moulded handrail. These stairs provided direct access to the offices in the main ranges, but they also led more directly to the Council Chamber and the Rates Office that was below it in the cross arm of the A-plan; the burghers of Lambeth came in the side entrances to pay their

rates. The siting of these principal spaces in this central area cushions them from street noise and allows them to be well lit from the south, explicit intentions.[12] The careful resolution of Lambeth's internal layout led it to be illustrated as exemplary, 'There is proper departmenting and yet proper means of communication, both by staircases and lifts, while for each department the offices which are used by the public are placed near the entrance and those of a more private nature are kept away from them, with strong rooms carefully placed wherever possible away from the external walls.'[13]

The ground-floor offices in the main ranges have been altered, but they appear to have been plain spaces with timber fireplace surrounds. The suite of offices along Brixton Hill was originally for the Borough Accountant's and Medical Officer's departments, that along Acre Lane for the Borough Engineer's. On the first floor there were Committee Rooms near the north end, connecting to a big Reception Room on the west side. The original Mayor's Parlour was on the east (Brixton Hill) side. These rooms are or were panelled and there are bolection-moulded marble fireplaces. Retractable doors link the rooms of the west suite. The Reception Room and Mayor's Parlour linked across the corridors to an Anteroom or lobby in front of the Council Chamber, these doorways having enriched fanlit overdoors. The Mayor's Parlour has moved to the north Committee Room on the west side. Beyond the secondary staircases on the first floor there were more offices, with the Town Clerk's Department along Brixton Hill.

The Council Chamber is a rectangular room, 72ft by 42 ft (22m by 13m), evidently designed to seat ten Aldermen, seven Chairmen and 54 Councillors.[14] The room is centralized by its richly decorated plaster ceiling, formed as a cross-in-rectangle or quincunx, with four Ionic columns (specified as marble) taking the pendentives to a 30ft- (9m)-diameter saucer dome which has a central lantern from the base of which an ornamental light fitting is suspended. The segmentally vaulted arms extend to apsidal ends over two galleries, for members to the east and the public to the west, each seating fifty; mirrors have been applied to the gallery frontals, to allow those in the galleries to see those beneath. There is direct access to these galleries via the Brixton Hill and Acre Lane staircases. The Chamber itself has a flat floor, and the seating appears to have been reordered and partially renewed, perhaps in the early 1960s,[15] probably reusing parts of the original fittings. The mayoral dais is to the north between 'Ayes' and 'Noes' doors into the Anteroom, with seating for 70 radiating away to the south. However, the plan published in 1905 shows the dais to the east, facing horseshoe-plan seating to the west around a table, and the public gallery.[16] Yet, in other respects the building was not completed exactly as projected in the 1905 plan, so perhaps the room has not been re-oriented. If it has it is unclear why.

The ground-floor Rates Office below the Council Chamber has been enlarged to the north and made a Committee Room, also perhaps work of the early 1960s. The room was further altered in the late 1980s with a suspended ceiling. Alterations in 1961-3 certainly included conversion of the Juvenile Court Room in the basement to be a dance hall.[17]

The Assembly Hall is linked via the Acre Lane range's corridor, but discrete and conventionally entered from Acre Lane. Its external elevations combine sub-Palladian classicism with Art Deco detailing, all in red brick and Portland stone. The main five-bay front has triple doors under a raking metal canopy with a coved soffit. The upper storey has metal casements windows. At the southwest corner there is a setback to a stubby tower with a

pedimental head, an awkward partner to the bolder tower of 1906-8. The elevational design transforms into the streamlined as it turns the corner to Buckner Road. Centred in an otherwise largely blank brick elevation is a sculpted figure of Youth, by Denis Dunlop. It depicts Lambeth Palace (old Lambeth) from which rises the human form of Rejuvenation (modern Lambeth), 'holding in his hand the living twig which speaks growth and change that are still to come'.[18]

The Assembly Hall was always intended to be an adaptable space because 'it has not been possible to decide in advance the uses to which it may be put.'[19] It is a simple squarish space with a raised stage, lined with a dado of teak panels on deal grounds under acoustic wall lining. The entrance vestibule has marble wall lining and a coffered ceiling, with the original pay desk from the foyer resited and built up as a kiosk. Within the narrow foyer has five saucer lights. A metal balustraded stair to the south leads to a large committee room, 48ft by 27ft, over the vestibule and foyer, evidently also used for music and dancing from the outset.[20]

Report by Peter Guillery
Photographs by Sid Barker
Recorded 25th September 1998

NOTES

1. *The Builder*, 5 Dec. 1903, p. 587; 23 April 1904, p.434; 11 June 1904, p. 639; 2 July 1904, p. 21; 6 May 1905, pp. 487-8; 20 May 1905, p. 545; 26 Aug. 1905, p. 232; 18 Nov. 1905; *Building News*, 19 May 1905; *The Architect*, 4 and 22 Aug. 1905; Lambeth Archives Department, Minet Library (LAD), Lambeth Town Hall Drawings, 1902-6, MBL/ENG/P/4/1-16; British Architectural Library, RIBA Collection, Lambeth Town Hall, *c.*1905, W3/37/1-8; A. S. Gray, *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Dictionary*, 1985, pp. 202-3, 371.
2. RCHME, National Monuments Record (NMR), Bedford Lemere Collection, 20209.
3. LAD, LP006, watercolour perspective by H. Austen Hall, 1919.
4. *The Builder*, 21 Oct. 1938, p. 779.
5. London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Building Files, GLC/AR/BR/13/175889; drawings GLC/AR/BR/15/2635; *The Builder*, 21 Oct. 1938, pp. 779-82.
6. LMA, GLC/AR/BR/13/175889; *Building Design*, 22 Sept. 1995.
7. N. Pevsner & B. Cherry, *The Buildings of England, London 2: South*, 1983, p. 275.
8. NMR, Bedford-Lemere Collection 20209.
9. *The Builder*, 20 May 1905, p. 545; G. A. T. Middleton, *Modern Buildings: Their Planning, Construction & Equipment*, 1906, pp. 42-4.
10. LAD, Cuttings File 789.
11. Ibid.
12. *The Builder*, 20 May 1905, p. 545.
13. Middleton, *op. cit.*
14. LAD, MBL/ENG/P/4/15.
15. The existing seating was present in 1965 to judge from a photograph on display in the building.
16. *The Builder*, 20 May 1905, p. 545.
17. LMA, GLC/AR/BR/13/175889; *Building Design*, 22 Sept. 1995.
18. *The Builder*, 21 Oct. 1938, p. 780; the adoption in the late 1990s of the motto 'New Labour New Lambeth' is a less poetic attempt at similar signification.
19. *The Builder*, 21 Oct. 1938, p. 780.
20. London Metropolitan Archives, Building Files, GLC/AR/BR/13/175889, drawings

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GREATER LONDON **NBR index no: 91150**

LEWISHAM **NGR : TQ 3637 7698**

New Cross Road

Deptford Town Hall

Summary

Deptford Town Hall was built from 1903-07 to the designs of H.V. Lanchester, J.A. Stewart and E.A. Rickards. The building, which has two-storeys with an attic and basement, has a north facade of Portland stone with yellow brick elsewhere. Built on a cramped site, partly due to the former Postmans office to the east and Public Baths to the south, which predate the building. It has a notable Edwardian Baroque facade by Rickards with a richly decorated interior which survives largely unaltered.

Report

In 1902 Deptford Borough Council invited designs for a new town hall, awarding the first prize to the designs of H.V. Lanchester, J.A. Stewart (who died in 1904) & E.A. Rickards, a firm then establishing a reputation for civic architecture having won, amongst others, the prestigious competition for the new Cardiff Municipal Buildings in 1897. The winning design, as illustrated in the Builder, November 1st 1902, is substantially as built. Construction was started in 1903 and the building was officially opened by the Mayor on July 19th 1905 although work continued until 1907. The builders were H.L. Holloway and the cost was £31,228.

Demands for larger, more prestigious accommodation for the Vestry of St. Paul, Deptford were first voiced in the late 19th century. In 1895 the Vestry applied for the status of a District Council, prompted in part by the assistance towards new buildings available under the Local Government Act of 1894. The site for the building had originally been acquired by the Baths Commission in 1892 for the Laurie Grove Public Baths with part of the site reserved for a Vestry Hall and offices. By the time the Borough Council were in a position to go ahead with the new building the site was already judged inadequate and had to be extended.

The plan of the building is essentially rectangular with single end-bays of one-room depth to utilise the full width of the cramped plot. The lack of space necessitated the omission of a public hall, with the Council Chamber having to provide this addition function.

The style of the building is, according to the submission of the architects, in the ` traditional style of the 17th and 18th century buildings of the riverside town such as Greenwich, Gravesend and Rochester.' Deptford's nautical associations provide the inspiration for the buildings ornamentation, recalling the great decorative tradition of Victorian Town Halls.

The north facade is of stone enriched with sculptural ornament by H.C. Fehr, P.Montford and H. Poole. The outer bays of the seven bay facade are set back with a carriageway in the west bay. The basement area, an addition to the original design, has wrought iron railings incorporating the Borough monogram; its coat of Arms surmount the carriageway. The ground floor has square piers and flanking columns supporting the overhanging first floor. In the middle bay is the round arched entrance, inset with elaborate ironwork, and flanked by figures of Tritons as corbels to the oriel bay above. On the first floor there are four statues of Naval figures representing Sir Francis Drake, Admiral Blake, Admiral Nelson and ' a conventional representation of a British Admiral in 1905'. 1 In the original design Rickards had proposed six statues with the remaining figures being accommodated in the returns to the outer bays. The large oriel bay has an elaborate balcony to the middle of its three windows with, at its head, a carved relief of a ships prow and other marine symbols. To the east is a plainer balcony to the former Mayor's Parlour. There is a pedimented attic to the central three bays with a relief of a fanciful naval battle in the tympanum. The clock turret above is surmounted by a weather vane in the form of a ship.

Interior

The principal features of the interior planning were described by the architects to be `the arrangement of all rooms round a central hall containing a marble staircase with arcaded galleries on either side; this hall is lit from a dome, and its position makes the lines of communication between the rooms convenient and direct. The ground floor is devoted to the principal offices, while the first floor contains the Council-chamber, committee-rooms, &c., arranged to form one spacious suite; additional accommodation being placed in the basement and on a mezzanine floor.' The most significant alteration to this scheme has been the conversion of all the civic rooms, with the exception of the Council-chamber, to offices. However, the highly decorated processional route remains unaltered. Also surviving in many of the rooms are the original chimneypieces, from the elaborate marble and plaster designs in the principal spaces to the wooden bowed surrounds of the lesser offices.

At the ground floor there has been no significant alteration to the vestibule and vaulted entrance hall. The imperial marble stair, which rises in a single flight to the mezzanine level, retains its elaborate wrought-iron balustrade of ovals with crossed anchors, tridents and chains divided by floral elements. The former offices of the Borough Surveyors Department to the east of the vestibule have been altered by the conversion of the former waiting room to a corridor. To the west side the former offices of the Town Clerk have been partitioned to form the main reception area. The offices to the south of the stair hall retain some of their original wood and glass partions.

The mezzanine level originally housed the Members Library, now subdivided to form offices, and the Assembly Room, also converted to offices. These rooms are separated from the stair landing by a screen with two oval openings filled with elaborate wrought iron scrolls and electrically illuminated lanterns. Access to an extension of temporary offices to the south of the building has been made through a former window opening in the west passage.

The Council rooms of the first floor no longer serve their original functions, although most retain original decorative name plaques to indicate there former use. The Council chamber, which fills the five bays of the north side of the building and part extends into the attic storey, is little altered apart from the enlargement of the dais at the west end and replacement of the original seating. The decoration of the room, with its florid plaster ceiling, is perhaps more subduied than the gilded plaster relief of mermaids that flanks the entrance from the stairhall might lead one to expect. The original decorative scheme proposed by the architects was not executed, perhaps for reasons of cost. The 'spacious suite' described by the architects has been altered in the 1960s by the insertion of corridors on the north sides of the former antechambers to the committee rooms. All the Committee rooms retain their original chimneypieces but Committee Room 2 has been subdivided and Committee Room no. 3 no longer has its original coved ceiling. To the west is a secondary stair which has an entrance at the ground floor to provide access to the public gallery at the west end of the Council chamber. It also provides access to the upper floor at the west side of the building, which originally housed the caretakers accomodation but is presently in use as offices. Access to the clock tower is from this level.

The basement area was originally a muniments room and, although still in use as a storage area, it has been considerably altered and subdivided.

1. Brochure commemorating the opening of the Town Hall, Deptford, 1905.

Visited by Joanna Smith and Peter Guillery 19th August 1992

Report written by Joanna Smith February 1993.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95852

LEWISHAM NGR: TQ 3767 7367

CATFORD ROAD

LEWISHAM CIVIC CENTRE (PARTLY DEMOLISHED)

This municipal complex comprises a 1930s town hall, with attached council offices, built in two phases between 1958 and 1963, and a 1970s extension housing the council chamber and other civic spaces. However, the earliest municipal building on this site was a vestry hall built in 1874-5, demolished to make way for the 1970s block. Such complexity of development is by no means unusual in London (other examples include the civic groups at Bermondsey and Woolwich) a general necessity for piecemeal expansion and reuse of sites deriving in part from the rapid growth of London and an expanding and thrice-reformed local government structure.

Plans for purpose-built premises for the Lewisham District Board of Works were drawn up by George Elkington in 1874, following an unsatisfactory competition the preceding year won by Elkington only months after he had resigned as a board member. Despite the manner of his appointment, Elkington was a competent architect who went onto design vestry halls for Penge (1876-9) and Bermondsey (1879-82). For Lewisham he provided a Gothic style building containing a board room with public gallery, two committee rooms, general offices and strong rooms. This was constructed in 1874-5 at a cost of £11,000. The Gothic style was specified by the board - the more common preference at this date was the Italianate - followed a debate on the relative merits of the two styles. One advantage of the Gothic idiom was that it allowed for asymmetry and variation of elements within the same façade, which Elkington exploited by giving his building an off-centre porch and tower, and lighting his first-floor board room with a massive arched window.

In 1887 a rear extension to the building was mooted but the addition was only approved in a different form in 1897 and executed in 1899-1901, probably in anticipation of 1899 London Government Act which replaced the Lewisham Board of Works with a metropolitan borough of the same name. This extension allowed for an enlarged board room (which became the council chamber when the new authority was formed), three committee rooms and a substantial number of new offices. This change in status was also reflected in the embellishment of the corridors with marble mosaics depicting the new borough's coat of arms.

In 1928 an open competition was held for a new town hall at Lewisham. In an echo of the abandoned 1887 proposal (for a large public hall, two small halls, offices and shops), the competition brief was for a concert hall with a block of shops and lettable offices. As the intended site was adjoining the existing town hall it was decided that the new building should harmonise with the old. The assessor, F. Winton Newman, awarded first premium to Messrs Bradshaw Gass and Hope, a Bolton-based firm. The partner responsible for the design, Arthur John Hope, was then successfully developing a specialisation in public buildings.[1] His scheme had a large public hall (to accommodate 1100 persons) adjoining Elkington's building, sharing its north-south axis and with its entrance also off Catford Road. To the east of the hall there was a semi-circle of shops and offices, which had a separate entrance fronting onto Rushey Green.

A somewhat revised design was approved by the London County Council in 1930 and was under construction from 1931-2. The result was one of London's most ebullient 1930s civic buildings, fully steel-framed and faced throughout with Portland stone. The curved office-and-shop block has arched windows divided by pilaster/buttresses, a *porte cochere* entrance and a *fleche* on the roof above. This block shares a hipped tiled roof and a recessed fourth storey with the hall façade, which is differentiated by a curved full-height bay with tall arched windows. The whole edifice is embellished with carved stone decoration, including depictions of heraldic beasts and shields, in a cod-Gothic to match the old town hall.

This mock Gothic treatment is continued inside, used to bold effect in the elliptically arched concert hall where the arcaded walls have ribbed pilasters topped by more heraldic beasts and shields (in fibrous plaster) above an oak-panelled dado. Like all municipal assembly halls, the space was multi-functional, intended predominantly for dancing or concerts, and therefore supplied with a sprung floor, basic stage facilities, a projection box and demountable seating. Equal attention was given to the stairs and lobby areas, which have elaborate ironwork grilles and window balustrades, and ornately patterned cornices. Permanent stepped seating has been inserted into the smaller hall on the lower ground floor, but otherwise most of the interior survives in good order, with many original good-quality light fittings still in place.

The need for additional office space had led to plans to redevelop land to the west of the old town hall (occupied by stables and a store) in 1937-8, but they were stalled by the outbreak of war. The idea was revived in 1949, expanded to embrace the whole island site. A new town hall and municipal offices were proposed, involving the demolition of Elkington's 1874-5 building. Adverse economic conditions required the adoption of a phased construction and held up the completion of stage one until 1958.[2] Designed under the borough architect, M. H. Forward, this scheme took its cue from the rounded site boundary and Hope's 1930s building, comprising a long curved block of offices to the north, with a lower block, dominated by a tall corner tower, on the site of the vestry hall. Stage one of the office block was built in 1958-9, whilst the next phase, the western section of the offices, was planned in 1960 and carried out from 1961-3. This reinforced-concrete-framed stone-faced six-storey structure is designed in the low-key Modernist aesthetic of its day, although its recessed upper storey and the pronounced mullions on its front elevation recall the 1930s building.

Approval for stage three, replacing the 1874-5 edifice, had been granted in 1958 but work was held up by impending local government reforms. In 1963 Forward substantially revised his original design, an acknowledgement that 'new ideas had entered the field of architectural design'.[3] The final design, carried out under Forward's successor as borough architect A. Sutton, abandoned the tower. The 'Civic Suite' was now conceived of as a deliberate contrast to the 1930s building, its reinforced-steel frame clad in 'hard' stainless steel, glass and marble in contradistinction to the 'softer' stone. Constructed between 1968 and 1971, the building sits on a podium, faced with large mural panels of ceramic tiles in an abstract pattern, the entrance marked by a mosaic of the coat of arms of the London Borough of Lewisham, the successor to the metropolitan borough. Although modern in style, the Civic Suite retains many of the traditional elements of a town hall, albeit designed in the architectural idiom of the day. The entrance hall on the ground floor, lined with white marble, leads to a ceremonial stair of teak and upper foyer both overlooked by a 20ft square mosaic of Italian marble tesserae. Its undulating circular design was created by Hans Unger and Eberhard Schulze to complement the

buildings 'theme of simplicity and unity'.[4] The foyer itself, amply lit by large windows, contains some mementos of the borough's civic past, including the large oak mayoral chair from the previous council chamber and a display case housing the maces, new and old. On one side of the foyer is an enfilade of rooms, including separate parlours for the mayor and mayoress that have walls lined with Indian Laurel wood. This material is also used to face the walls of the council chamber, which is located on the other side of the foyer, with entrances to either side of the mayoral dais. The chamber was fitted with rows of curved fixed desks, with free-standing armchairs, supplied from the outset with individual microphones and an automatic voting system.[5] When first completed Lewisham claimed, with some merit, that this was one of the most up-to-date council chambers in the country. Indeed, the building is distinguished by the high quality of materials and finishes, its light, airy circulation areas, and the amount of civic decoration.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 30th September 1998

NOTES

[1] Hope's other London town hall was at Wimbledon (1928-31).

[2] The priority for government loans being housing and school buildings, even the partially built pre-war town hall at Barking had to wait until 1954 to resume work.

[3] 'Lewisham Town Hall 1875/1971', commemorative pamphlet.

[4] Ibid.

[5] The seating was originally for 70, but some of the fixed desks appear to have been removed to allow for more smaller meetings with free seating.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 87378

MERTON NGR: TQ 2490 7061

BROADWAY

CENTRE COURT SHOPPING CENTRE (FORMERLY WIMBLEDON TOWN HALL) (PARTLY DEMOLISHED)

Wimbledon Public Offices was a modest Italianate building erected In 1878 to the competition-winning designs of Thomas Goodchild for the local board. The building was demolished in 1929 to make way for a new town hall. The latter building, erected in 1928-31, was also the subject of an architectural competition, in this instance won by Arthur John Hope, of the firm Bradshaw Gass and Hope. His design has some affinity to the French tradition of provincial town halls and was favourably received by the architectural press of the day. Faced in Portland stone, with a slate mansard roof, it comprised a D-shaped 'civic' range, fronting the Broadway, linked to a rear assembly hall. This represented an imaginative solution to a difficult site, already crowded by a fire station, court house, Baptist church and hall. Wimbledon Town Hall was rendered functionally obsolete in 1985 when the London Borough of Merton, the successor authority, moved to Crown House on London Road (see NBR Index file: 95854). Following three public enquiries, much of the listed town hall, along with the church, hall and fire station were demolished in 1990 for a retail development designed by the Building Design Partnership. Only the front range of the town hall and some of the other building façades were retained. For a full account of the building and its recent planning history see the English Heritage report by Susan Beattie.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Derek Kendall (1989)

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95889

NEWHAM NGR: TQ 4265 8355

BARKING ROAD

EAST HAM TOWN HALL AND TOWN HALL ANNEXE

One of London's grandest town halls, East Ham is the cornerpiece of a remarkable municipal complex, or 'local government district', erected in the years leading up to the First World War.[1] It was in 1898 that East Ham Urban District Council made the bold decision to implement progressive proposals for a municipal tramway, public library, electric lighting, swimming baths and a town hall. The background to all this municipal activity was the unparalleled growth of this largely working-class district, with a population that had risen from 10,000 in 1881 to 95,989 in 1900, but the inspiration and impetus were supplied by Sir John Bethell, Progressive MP and member of the UDC. Although East Ham fell outside of the county of London and into neighbouring Essex at this date, it was considered to be 'the largest corporation of London over the border', acknowledged in 1914 by the granting of County Borough status.[2] When it came to the design of its civic complex, East Ham seem to have taken a similar approach to that of Croydon Corporation (which had built a town hall of comparable grandeur in 1892-6) and looked to the municipal architecture of the northern and midland cities for inspiration.

In 1898 an open competition was held for a scheme comprising a public hall, council chamber, municipal offices, court house, reading and reference library, librarian's house, technical school, swimming bath, sanitary offices and fire station. The first premium was awarded to Henry A Cheers and Joseph Smith, of Twickenham and Blackburn, for a design that split the different functions between three separate buildings, with the public hall and council offices together on the north-west corner of the large site. Construction of the town hall commenced in 1901 and was completed two years later, the main contractor being D.W. Barker of Croydon. This actually followed the construction of the corporation tramsheds and electricity works, designed by the Borough Engineer W H Savage and built in 1900-1. The technical school, a detached block to the east of the town hall, was built to Cheers and Smith's design in 1904-5 but the later buildings of the complex were the work of successive borough engineers. Around this date the Methodist Central Hall, by Gunton and Gunton, was put on the north east corner of the site, as an adjunct to the municipal scheme. This was followed by Campbell's public library, put up in 1907-8, slightly to the south of the town hall. The swimming baths were opened in 1912, and the complex was completed by the fire station, added in 1913-4.[3] The style and materials of these later buildings broadly followed those of the town hall, producing a complex of rare homogeneity.

The style of the town hall is highly eclectic, originally termed 'Renaissance' but more recently described as 'Mixed Tudor and Baroque, also some hints at Loire chateaux'.[4] Built of red brick (from the Accrington Brick Co) and biscuit-coloured terracotta (by Messrs Doulton and Co.) and roofed in Westmoreland Slate, the edifice is dominated by a lofty asymmetrical clock tower 'intended to form the dominating attraction to the whole group of buildings when completed'.[5] It has two main frontages, to Barking Road and High Street South, both highly decorated, with tall round-headed windows to the public hall wing and a pediment surmounted by a Flemish

gable on the return. This surface exuberance helps visually to unify a building that has several grandly treated entrances and a variety of roof levels, although its picturesque quality inspired one local journalist to write, 'when the sun is shining, the blue-tinted slated and golden cupola of the hall make a most effective picture, and convey the impression of an Eastern City'.[6]

In its layout the building lacks the clear spatial organisation and logical planning that characterises the next generation of London's town halls. Following the established practice, the principal spaces are placed on the first floor, while the main hall is placed the long range of the L-shaped building, preceded by stairs and cloakrooms. Extended southward from this is a block containing another stair (for the council) and the mayor's parlour leading to a short wing returning to the west housing the council chamber and committee rooms. The offices occupy the ground floor, apart from an apsidal-ended minor hall under the main hall and police courts below the council chamber range. The level of decoration in the principal spaces equals that of the exterior. The council chamber has a compartmented ceiling with a central domed lantern, glazed like the windows in 'subdued tints in stained glass' to give 'diffused light over the apartment'.[7] It retains its original mayoral dais, complete with grandiose mayor's chair, set before a niche incorporating the borough's coat of arms, but the horse-shoe plan seating may have been reconfigured to accommodate a greater number of members.[8] The walls have carved dado oak panelling, with a public gallery, provided with separate access, to the west side. The mayor's parlour also retains much of its original character, including some apparently original furniture and a carved wooden chimneypiece, its mantelpiece used to display the mace. The circulation areas have a high level of finish, with mosaic floors, dado panelling and ceiling panels.[9] But the greatest attention was lavished on the public hall. This generously sized space, able to seat 1200, has a coved ceiling, with bold ribs that conceal the steel trusses that support the roof. Its walls are half panelled, with pilasters of Devonshire marble above. At the west end is a stage, with proscenium arch and an organ gallery on its back wall, answered by a gallery to the east side. Its vestibule even retains the original half-octagonal ticket booth.

The muncipal complex at East Ham has undergone some alteration over the years, but the town hall itself survives in good order.[10] In 1906-7 the Borough Engineer Campbell submitted plans for an extension for the public health and education departments, and in 1910 a southern addition was built in the space between the town hall and the library.[11] In 1939 a three-storey building called the East Ham Town Hall Annexe was built on Barking Road, just beyond Wellington Road (which formed the eastern limit of the 'municipal' island). Designed by the Borough Engineer A.T.Bridgewater, this low-key classical building, faced in brick with artificial stone dressings, had maternity, child and school clinics on the ground floor and departmental offices in the upper storeys. The town hall itself has continued to serve as the main administrative centre for local government in the area, occupied since 1965 by the London Borough of Newham - the successor to the county boroughs of East Ham and West Ham.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photographs by James Davies
Recorded 8th March 1994

NOTES

[1] *East Ham Echo*, 6th Feb 1903.

[2] *The London Argus*, 18 March 1905

[3] For the swimming baths see the separate Buildings Report.

[4] N. Pevsner , *The Buildings of England Essex* ,1966.

[5] *East Ham Echo*, 1903

[6] *East Ham Mail*, supplement 7 Feb 1906

[7] *East Ham Echo*, 1903

[8] For what may have been the original arrangement see the plan in the Public Record Office (HLG 6/474).

[9] Built-in laminated wood seating is even provided outside the council chamber.

[10] The most notable loss being the Central Hall demolished in 1969.

[11] *The Builder*, 13 Oct 1906 and PRO, HLG 6/474.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95856

NEWHAM NGR: TQ 3910 8450

THE GROVE

NEWHAM MUNICIPAL OFFICES (DEMOLISHED)

This distinctive ziggurat-shaped building was a local landmark for its short life, 1976 to 1997. It was designed 'in-house' by the London Borough of Newham, under the borough architect Kenneth Lund assisted by Norman White and L.K. Ozolins, in 1971 as part of a larger scheme. The site had been earmarked by West Ham Borough Council for new offices but their scheme was shelved in the face of impending local government reform. After the amalgamation of West Ham and East Ham into the London Borough of Newham in 1965, it was decided to centralise the new authority's services on this site and a new scheme was drawn up. The intention was that the new civic centre should 'escape from the monotony of the matchbox type' that characterised so much contemporary office design.[1] Two differently sized ziggurats were proposed, linked by a block containing a council chamber, but in the adverse economic situation of the 1970s only the smaller ziggurat was built. This had three levels, its external projecting concrete frame giving it the appearance of a 'honeycombed pyramid'. Internally it had a broad concourse, running north-south, on the ground floor with the office space on all three levels arranged on the *Burolandschaft* or open-plan principle. The 80ft aluminium-clad chimney at the rear was said to resemble 'a space rocket on its launching pad'.

Report by Joanna Smith

NOTES

[1] This and all subsequent quotes taken from the brochure commemorating the opening of the new municipal offices, 7 May 1976.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95856

NEWHAM NGR: TQ 3891 8431

STRATFORD BROADWAY

WEST HAM TOWN HALL (FORMERLY STRATFORD OLD TOWN HALL)

Until 1869 the West Ham Local Board of Health, constituted in 1856 from three ancient Essex wards, held its meetings at Rokeby House, but in that year they moved into new premises in Stratford Broadway. The new building, designed by the board's surveyor, Lewis Angell, and John Giles, a private architect, was the result of a competition unveiled two years earlier that attracted over thirty entries, and allegations of nepotism - a not unusual scenario for the day.[1] An imposing three-storey building in Portland stone and white brick, executed in a style Pevsner described as 'debased arched Cinquecento'[2], it is most notable for the dominating 100 ft square tower set asymmetrically in the north-west angle of the building. This originally contained Lewis Angell=s private office, muniment-rooms and other accommodation. The imposing 100ft frontages on West Ham lane and The Broadway, the central two-storey columned portico and liberal provision of statuary - allegorical figures representing Justice, Liberty, Fortitude etc. which stand high up the building on the balustraded parapets of the first and second floor levels - complete the effect of sombre dignity. At the time of its completion *The Illustrated London News* pronounced it 'the finest building in the county of Essex'.[3]

If the style and handling of the building was fairly elaborate for a vestry hall of the 1860s, then the planning and interior layout was typically straightforward, with the ground floor given over to entrance hall, public waiting hall (at the rear, with separate access), and the various local board and parochial offices and board rooms. The first floor was principally and characteristically devoted to the ceremonial functions of the building: vestry-cum-assembly hall, Magistrates' room, retiring rooms etc. The large vestry hall, measuring some 50 ft by 75 ft by 30 ft high is remarkable for the degree of ornament and embellishment lavished on it: fluted pillars with Corinthian capitals surmounted by shields, ornamental cornice and floral panelling adorn the walls, and the panelled ceiling, the work of the French designer Mons Boekbinder, was described by one local newspaper as "probably the best panelled ceiling in the county of Essex, or even east of Temple Bar".[4] The total cost, including the site, was £20,000.[5]

In 1885 West Ham Public Offices and Vestry Hall was enlarged rearwards to provide a police court, assembly hall and public offices. The architect chosen for these additions was, again, Lewis Angell.[6] Following the creation of the London Borough of Newham in 1965, the building was used as offices for the education department of the council.

Following a disastrous fire in July 1982, the building was completely restored by Kenneth Lund, Roy Mizen, Peter Revell and Kevin Hagger. The official re-opening of the building by HM The Queen on 16 July 1986 is commemorated by a plaque sited above the first-floor balcony. More recently, the building has been marketed by the borough as a hireable venue space for conferences, banquets, exhibitions, wedding receptions etc.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 5th October 1998

NOTES

1. One unnamed competitor accused the Local Board of acting most injudiciously, if not unfairly. With an architect acting as their officer, if they considered that he was in a position to carry out the work, with his other duties, they might very properly have placed the matter at once in his hands; but having appealed to the profession at large, they should not have allowed their surveyor to compete. His position would necessarily give him advantages, and his selection, they might be sure, would bring down, as it has done, a cry of unfairness that no explanation could wipe away. *The Builder*, 19 October 1867, 761.

Lewis Angell's and John Giles's winning design 'Civis' garnered the first premium of £100; G a Wilson was awarded the second premium of £50 for his design marked 'Adsum', and H S Legg's design 'Industria' was awarded the third premium of £25. *The Builder*, 12 October 1867, 752. The contractor was T Ennor who built it for the contract price of £9,200.

2. Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Essex (Volume 6*, 1973), 374.

3. *The Illustrated London News*, 18 September 1869, 272.

4. *Stratford Times*, 10 July 1869.

5. *The Illustrated London News*, op.cit.

6. PRO HLG 6/923.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95857

REDBRIDGE NGR: TQ 438 864

HIGH ROAD ILFORD/OADFIELD ROAD

REDBRIDGE TOWN HALL (FORMERLY ILFORD TOWN HALL)

The story behind this rather grand Renaissance-style town hall of 1899-1901 is one of rapid urbanisation; during the last decade of the 19th century Ilford grew from a large village within the parish of Barking with 10,000 inhabitants to a substantial town with over 41,000 occupants. As 'House after house and street after street appeared in quick succession' the town-in-the-making was governed from 1890 by a local board, merged just four years later into an urban district council.[1] In 1893 a competition to design new public offices was held, the first premium being awarded to Messrs Clark and Hutchinson.[2] But despite the pressing need – at the time the council were meeting in hired rooms over a shop and later a schoolroom – they prevaricated for three years before deciding to commission the winner of the second premium, Ben B. Wollard, to design their new offices.[3]

The site, on the junction of the High Road and Oakfield Road, provided Wollard with an opportunity for a measure of civic display. It appears that the Bath-stone-faced building was originally intended to have two symmetrical fronts, but in the event only the High Road façade was given the grand treatment.[4] This elevation has a projecting centre, containing a curved balcony over an entrance, surmounted by a short tower with a copper-clad cupola. Additionally, there is a pair of semi-circular porches, and pedimented end bays with oriel windows topped by smaller cupolas. Two of these entrances serve the public hall, which was well supplied with exits, while the easternmost entrance was for the council offices. The eclectic style of the building was described at the time as 'Free Classic', 'that is to say, the various members such as cornices, columns, balusters, mouldings, and general details such as were used by the ancient Romans, but the grouping together of these members is free, lighter and less severe, than the treatment in those times'.[5]

The building was planned in two halves - a public hall to the east and the council offices or 'business section' to the west. The intention was that 'although one building, one section, when in use, would not clash with the other, when in use at the same time'.[6] The generously sized hall, capable of seating 1000 people, is an elliptically-arched space, provided with a stage, with decorated plasterwork adorning its proscenium arch, and a compact gallery, set above the entrance lobby of the hall. This remains largely as built although some alterations were made in 1933, principally the lowering and enlarging of the stage, as well as the addition of dressing rooms to the rear. The 'business section' had offices on the ground floor with the council chamber, chairman's parlour and committee rooms above. This section was provided with a cyclopean stone stair with chunky urn balusters and the broadest balustrade imaginable. The rooms have suffered varying degrees of alteration, most particularly the council chamber, which was superseded in 1933 by a new chamber resulting in the inevitable loss of fittings. When newly built the council equipped its new offices with up-to-the-minute technological innovations, such as speaking tubes connecting the offices and automatic fire alarms in the hall.

Against a background of continuing growth and increasing administrative responsibilities, the council planned extensions to the building as early as 1904, but the work was held up and eventually wartime financial restrictions intervened. In 1925-7 a central library (with some council offices on the first floor) was built to the south, on Oakfield Road, handled in a style that was sympathetic to the existing building. The town hall finally got its extension in 1931-3, fitted into the area between the library and town hall. This steel-framed addition was designed by L.E.J. Reynolds, the borough engineer (his predecessor H. Shaw was responsible for the library), to blend in with its neighbours, therefore adopting a notably old-fashioned style for its date. In addition to offices it also provided a new council chamber and additional committee rooms. The traditional-looking council chamber has handsome walnut furniture and a rich decorative scheme, all tactfully refurbished in 1996-7. The walls are panelled in Indian laurel wood and adorned with fluted marble Ionic columns (with bronzed caps and bases). Above is a fine elliptically arched roof with a central skylight. Unusually the main entrance is placed behind the mayoral dais, an arrangement that had passed out of favour elsewhere in London. The usual horseshoe pattern of fixed seating was provided, with public seating, arranged in tiers at the west end, separated from the rest of the room by a low barrier and served by its own stair. The committee rooms are arranged off a handsome central corridor lined with wooden dado panelling. The neo-Georgian style members' rooms and mayor's parlour, both of which survive largely as built, were also finished with wooden panelling.

There were plans to replace the town hall with a civic centre devised by Frederick Gibberd and H.J. Mulder in the early 1960s but these were halted by impending government reforms. The authority brought into being in 1965, the London Borough of Redbridge, also favoured a new building. Their scheme, described at the time as a '£10 million twinkle in the eyes of Redbridge's Tory councillors' was planned for a site at Barkingside.[7] A low-rise pentagon, designed by a team headed by the Borough Architect, Michael Booth, was proposed. Construction was intended to commence in the mid 1970s but the timing was inauspicious and the scheme was shelved.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 7th December 1998

NOTES

[1] *The Municipal Journal*, 13 Dec 1901.

[2] *The Builder* 28 Jan 1983, 69.

[3] *Building News* 17 Jul 1896.

[4] *The Municipal Journal*, 13 Dec 1901.

[5] Supplement to the *Ilford Guardian*, 17 Dec 1901.

[6] *The Builder* 14 Dec 1901, 539.

[7] *Stratford Times*, 10 July 1969.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO:95858

RICHMOND UPON THAMES NGR: TQ 1778 7476

HILL STREET

RICHMOND LIBRARY (FORMERLY RICHMOND TOWN HALL)

This mixed-Renaissance-style building was originally designed by W.J. Ancell in 1890 although its present appearance derives partly from post-war rebuilding . The site, running from Hill Street to the river Thames, had been given to Richmond Vestry in 1888 by Sir J. Whittaker Ellis (the first mayor after Richmond became chartered as a Borough in 1890). The Castle Hotel then occupied the site, and the original intention seems to have been to convert rather than rebuild.[1] However, the following year a competition was held, with the first premium being awarded by the assessor, Mr James Edmeston, to George Elkington and Son. Although the vestry approved the award, concurring that Elkington's scheme best fulfilled the competition conditions including the all-important cost restriction of £10,000, some members preferred the elevations of Ancell's entry. After some debate, the vestry opted for Ancell, although his design exceeded the stipulated cost; such impolicy being, as *The Builder* wryly noted, 'just what may be expected in this class of competition'.[2] The completed building was opened in 1893, its total cost, including a new roadway to the river and laying out a pleasure ground on the riverfront, being £24,000.[3]

The town hall was badly damaged by bombing in the Second World War, and was only reopened in 1952 after an extensive restoration and remodelling by Gordon Jeeves. When the new local authority, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, came into being in 1965 it inherited other council accommodation in Twickenham and by the early 1980s Richmond Town Hall had apparently fallen into a poor state of repair. It was then decided to refurbish the building in conjunction with a redevelopment of the adjoining riverside area, designed by Quinlan Terry and completed in 1988. As part of this scheme the town hall was replanned as a reference library, museum and tourist information centre, with some commercial use.

All three fronts of the three-storey building (it originally had only a partial second floor), faced with red brick and stone dressings, are still recognisably Ancell's work. This was described at the time 'a grouped pilastered design, carried by a rusticated base, carving being introduced and massed to give additional effect'.[4] The Hill Street facade, eschewing symmetry, had a three-sided bay window, an almost-central entrance and a corner tower. The longer return elevation, fronting Whittaker Avenue, contains the prinicipal entrance, marked by a gently curved bay window. The river front is distinguished by a large first-floor balcony. The major alterations to the façades have been at the upper level; when built they had ornate gabled rooflines, replaced with a simple tiled mansard roof when the building was refurbished and fully raised to three storeys in 1952. Other alterations to the Hill Street elevation include the rebuilding of the cupola above the corner tower, in a simplified version of the original, and the shortening of the projecting clock (the more ornately decorated original having 'ding-dong chimes and a large bell striking the hours'[5]) and the addition of a shorter cupola, presumably for balance.[6]

Ancell's internal layout had the inevitable offices on the ground floor, with a committee room facing the riverfront. The main ceremonial stair was placed near the centre, behind an entrance

hall accessed from Whittaker Avenue, with an abundance of secondary stairs serving the offices, committee room, chairmen's (later mayor) parlour, and council chamber on the first floor. The galleried chamber, having a particularly pleasant location overlooking the river and pleasure grounds, was provided with a public balcony. Jeeves restoration largely respected this plan, recreating the council chamber in a late-seventeenth-century style, but adding extra office space by enlarging the existing second storey to the full dimensions of the building. The interior underwent further alterations in the 1980s, as part of Terry's new development.

Report by Joanna Smith.
Photography by Sid Barker, 30th April 1998.

NOTES

[1] *The Builder* 28 Jul 1888, 68.

[2] *The Builder* 30 Nov 1889 386.

[3] *The Builder* 17 June 1893, 474-5.

[4] *The Builder* 17 June 1893.

[5] Ibid.

[6] This may have been added as part of Quinlan Terry's encircling development.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95865

SOUTHWARK NGR: TQ 3670 8108

SPA ROAD

BERMONDSEY VESTRY HALL (DEMOLISHED) AND MUNICIPAL OFFICES

The now demolished Bermondsey Vestry Hall was built 1879-82 to provide larger, more centralised office and meeting space for the vestry, whose local administrative duties had increased massively because of the rapid urbanisation of the district. By this time the area under the vestry's jurisdiction had nearly doubled since the passing of the 1856 Metropolis Local Management Act, and the population had increased by a similar factor. The site chosen - a former tanyard - was suitably large and central, and was close to the Vestry's wharf and dock, enabling use of a 'tidal culvert' to reduce water costs. The size of the site, which already incorporated public baths and washhouses (1854), permitted construction of not only the intended public hall and offices, but accommodation for the resident clerk of works, a three-storey warehouse and stables, and a stone depot. George Elkington, surveyor to the local board, was the architect appointed by the vestry hall committee who turned to Shoreditch Town Hall (1866-7) as a suitable model. Somewhat typically, costs were restricted at every opportunity - the lowest tenders for contractors and furniture and fittings being accepted, and the adoption of a pediment as opposed to a mansard roof. In spite of this, the building as depicted in a contemporary illustration in *The Builder*[1] was a somewhat generous affair in the prevailing Italianate mould, boasting a monumental frontage to Spa Road complete with first floor balcony supported on Corinthian columns and a large semicircular window under a central pediment. It was executed in picked stocks, with white Suffolk bricks employed for the decorative bands and arches, and the façade and portions of the elevations were faced with Portland stone. The basic T-shaped plan afforded straightforward circulation within, the front portion of the building containing entrance hall, lobbies, principal staircases etc, with a spine corridor opening onto the various offices to either side, and the committee rooms and large board room at the rear. The public hall, some 80ft by 52ft by 37ft in height occupied virtually the entire first floor and was provided with a platform or dais, galleries on either side and an additional gallery at the front end of the building. It could accommodate 1,400 people. Structurally the building is of interest for its adoption of the Dennett system of fireproof floor construction – a patented form that enjoyed some application in (amongst other building types) public halls through the late 19th-century.[2]

The next twenty years saw a spate of minor alterations and additions to the site, resulting by 1900 in a consolidated civic grouping with a town hall at its centre. These included the addition of a a public library (1890-1), coroners court (*c.*1891), enlargement of the board room by the addition of a public gallery (*c.*1894), alterations to the public hall for rendering it suitable for music, dancing and a theatre (c.1892 and c.1899), and construction of an adjacent mortuary, electric lighting station, depot etc. (*c.*1900). The latter additions presumably accompanied the creation of the Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey in 1900, at which point the building became the Town Hall. Further alterations continued episodically throughout the early twentieth century, often in the interests of public safety (the addition of further exits and external staircases for example).

In 1928 the public baths in Spa Road were pulled down to make way for new municipal offices

designed by H. Tansley, the council's own architect. This pure neo-Greek Revival composition, built 1928-30, is perhaps the most resolute exercise in classical revivalism applied to any of London's municipal buildings. Tansley, was positively fastidious in his approach, declaring 'every effort has been made to ensure that each line and detail of the columns and cornices, the pediment, doors and ornament shall be absolutely true to type, and the curve of even the smallest mould has been carefully thought out that it shall conform to the Greek manner'.[3] It's construction was necessitated by the inexorable increase in local administration and the consequent need to house expanding departments (namely the Town Clerk's, Borough Treasurer's, Borough Surveyor's, Public Health, and the Electricity Departments), although the vestry hall continued to provide other facilities – principally a council chamber and public hall. In 1963 the vestry hall was demolished following wartime bomb damage, despite the appointment a decade earlier of E Berry Webber to draw up plans for rebuilding. Its site is now used as a car park.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 28th September 1998

NOTES

1. *The Builder*, 13 November 1880, 595

2. The Dennet system was also employed in Hampstead Town Hall and Hackney Town Hall (demolished).

3. *Souvenir of the Opening of the New Municipal Offices*, 1 November 1930 (Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey).

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO 98891

SOUTHWARK NGR: TQ 352 794

LOWER ROAD

ROTHERHITHE TOWN HALL (DEMOLISHED)

Built in 1895-7, this richly adorned building, designed by Murray and Foster, was the outcome of a limited competition assessed, without professional advice, by Rotherhithe Vestry. The vestry, which lacked purpose-built accommodation, had been considering such a building since 1885, the date that it acquired the site on Lower Road. The site was a good size, with frontages on Lower Road, Neptune Road and Moodkee Street, and the stipulated cost, £15,000, was sufficient for a building of some consequence. Murray and Foster's design, designated 'Renaissance' at the time, but subsequently classified as Baroque Revival, took full advantage of the site's opportunities. The heavily ornamented elevations were of red brick and Portland stone, with roofs of green Westmoreland slates. The principal front on Lower Road had a central porch flanked by two caryatids supporting a balcony above, sculpted by Henry Poole (who also worked on Deptford Town Hall), a pediment adorned with ships, and a *flèche* on the pitched roof topped by a wrought-iron weather vane. The return elevation had a checkerboard gable, a short clock tower and a symmetrically treated section of seven bays, indicating the position of the public hall. This hall was placed, rather unusually, on the ground floor. The front portion of the building was arranged around a central octagonal vestibule, with a principal stair to the south, its handrail and balustrade of Devonshire marble. The public hall, entered from Moodkee Street, had a shallow stage with a square opening, and galleries on three sides. The first- floor vestry hall was placed at the front of the building, and was handsomely finished with oak panelling on the walls, two massive wooden chimney pieces, and an ornamental plaster ceiling. Even a public gallery, with its own access, was supplied. Placed just below the gallery was a sculpted panel, modelled by Miss E.M. Rope, depicting the dockyard activities of this Thames-side district. A maquette of this relief is held by the Museum of London; the only items to be salvaged at the time of the building's demolition were Poole's caryatids. A large committee room on the first floor also doubled as a coroners court when first built.

The council offices only enjoyed a relatively brief life, converted in 1904 to library use by R. J. Angel, surveyor to the Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey, which had succeeded the vestry in 1900. The building was badly damaged in the Second World War and its demolition followed. A scheme by E. Berry Webber for a new assembly hall, club and library on the site, occupied for a time by a temporary single-storey building operating as a public hall, came to nothing.

Report by Joanna Smith

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ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF ENGLAND

LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 98565

SOUTHWARK NGR: TQ 3223 7862

WALWORTH ROAD

SOUTHWARK MUNICIPAL OFFICES (FORMERLY ST MARY NEWINGTON VESTRY HALL)

From its inception in 1856, the Vestry of St Mary Newington, sought to erect 'a Vestry Hall and Offices for the accommodation both of the Vestry and the Board of Governors and Guardians of the Poor'.[1] In that year the Vestry, which then met in the Infant School Room, Queen's Head Row, and in the Vestry Room of the Parish Church, entered into negotiations with the Fishmongers' Company of the City of London for leasing a suitable site. However, legal wrangling hampered progress until 1863, when Mr. Jarvis, Surveyor of Sewers for the vestry, was appointed to design the new building. The construction of the building was itself fraught with problems: the original builders were dismissed before they even began work and their successor, Mr Harding, fared a similar fate when it transpired that he had sub-contracted another builder for executing all the stone work. In the event, this subcontractor was retained because of the quality (and advanced state of progress) of his work, but Messrs. Piper and Wheeler - one of 'eight builders of eminence'[2] who offered the lowest tender - were seconded to complete Harding's work. The building was formally opened on 8 August 1865, an event attended 'very numerously' by the Vestrymen, who afterwards dined together 'at their own expense'.[3] The total cost of the project was £10,000, loaned not from central government - the usual, post-1855 source of credit -, but from a private financier, Edward Chambers Nicholson.

In external appearance Jarvis's design is firmly within the Italianate mode typical of so many London vestry halls, yet a degree of distinction resides in the subtle incorporation of stylistic elements that owe more to the French Second Empire and High Victorian Gothic idioms. The end pavilions, their mansard roofs adorned with fishscale tiles, the rich, naturalistic carving ornamenting the openings, and the heavy corbel table to the eaves, comprise perhaps the most striking features of the two main elevations. By contemporary standards, St. Mary's Newington Vestry Hall was a large building: the frontage to Walworth Road was 90 ft., that to Wansey Street (then an unnamed, new, street) 110 ft. Both facades are faced in red brick, with dressings in Portland Stone (chosen in favour, after much deliberation, over Bath Stone) and columns of polished red granite. A large building may have been necessary in order to accommodate the offices of the three administrative bodies, all of which were located on the ground floor. The first floor originally housed the hall, two committee rooms and a small ante-room. The hall, later used as the council chamber, until recently preserved the original semi-circular seating arrangement upholstered with morocco leather and deeply-recessed ceiling panel that contained 83 sun burners. This, and other furniture, was made by Dawe & Son., of Islington to the designs of the architect. A new roof and ceiling have since been installed in the hall. Of note are the ornate iron girders supporting the first-floor landing and visible from the floor below; the lattice interstices of these are treated as Gothic tracery. This Gothic

note is continued in the stair hall, where the wainscot handrail is supported by twisted wrought-iron balusters linked by iron plates perforated in the pattern of plate tracery.

In *c.*1893 St. Mary's Newington Vestry Hall was extended by Jarvis & Son in matching style on Walworth Road to provide additional office space, linking it to the Public Library of 1893, by I'Anson. This extension, which cost of £900, was the cheaper of two proposed designs prepared by the architects - the other design, which differed principally in having an ornamental tower, would have cost an additional £1,100 to build. Its elevation is a mix of motifs derived from the earlier building, but further embellished by an arcaded attic storey and a segmental-arched entrance in the right-hand pavilion.

In 1900, when the Vestry of St Mary Newington was superseded by Southwark Borough Council, the building became the town hall. In 1930 the council, seeking to enlarge its municipal office and library space, purchased property in Walworth Road/Larcom Street. In the event, this site was redeveloped as a Health Services Department in 1937 at a cost of ,50,000, completing the municipal ensemble. Designed by Percy Smart, the Borough Engineer and Surveyor, this large, unusually detailed building is adorned by a sculpture designed and executed by E.J. & A.T. Bradford symbolising its purpose: 'Motherhood, the various stages of childhood and the spirit of healing are all represented'.[4]

In the wake of the 1965 reorganisations, when the former Camberwell Town Hall became the new town hall for the (enlarged) London Borough of Southwark, the building on Walworth Road became municipal offices and a register office. In 1999 it was proposed that the former council chamber would be re-used as a coroners court.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 28th September 1998

NOTES

1. 7th Annual Report of the Proceedings of the Vestry of the Parish of St. Mary, Newington, in the Country of Surrey . . . for the Year Ending 25th March, 1863, 6

2. 9th Annual Report of the Proceedings of the Vestry of the Parish of St. Mary, Newington, in the Country of Surrey . . . for the Year Ending 25th March, 1865, 5.

3. 10th Annual Report of the Proceedings of the Vestry of the Parish of St. Mary, Newington, in the Country of Surrey . . . for the Year Ending 25th March, 1866, 4.

4. *The Builder*, 24 September 1937, 531.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95864

SOUTHWARK NGR: TQ 3380 7680

PECKHAM ROAD/HAVIL ROAD

SOUTHWARK TOWN HALL (FORMERLY CAMBERWELL TOWN HALL)

The first building on this site was Edward Power's vestry hall, put up in 1872-3, designed in the French Renaissance and Italianate mix favoured at the time. This building, which replaced a nearby vestry hall of 1827, was partly demolished in 1934 to make way for the new Camberwell Town Hall, by the firm of Culpin and Bowers. This simple neo-Classical structure incorporated the Victorian vestry room, sandwiched between new blocks to the front and back. The building was renamed Southwark Town Hall in 1965, following local government reforms, and remains the main administrative headquarters for the area. It was refurbished in 1980.

It was in 1871 that the vestry of St Giles, Camberwell initiated a competition for a new premises, to replace the existing 1827 building on Peckham Road/Havil Road (opposite the site of the new building) which had been characterised as 'small, ill-ventilated and very injurious to health'.[1] The vestry selected the design of Edward Power, district surveyor for the south division of the City of London, themselves, having refused to appoint a professional advisor.[2] Built by D. King and Sons, the structure was completed in 1873 at a total cost, including furniture, of £15,711. Its principal front was on Peckham Road, faced in Bath stone, with a long return elevation to Havil Road, of brick with stone dressings. The front façade, which had a central entrance and a flat-headed pediment adorned with sculptural figures and a clock, was enhanced by being set back some distance from the road side. Inside, the two-storey building had the usual vestry offices on the ground floor, with a generously sized stair part way along the length, leading up to the spacious first-floor vestry hall, 47ft by 42ft, placed at the rear.

Over the following decades Camberwell continued to develop, some of the more notable additions being the fine group of late Victorian and Edwardian institutional buildings strung out along Peckham Road. The vestry was reformed in 1900, becoming the Metropolitan Borough of Camberwell, and, as workloads inexorably increased, the attention of the new authority turned to improving its own accommodation. In 1933 the firm of Culpin and Bowers was appointed to design an extension, the resulting scheme being largely the work of Bowers, who was a Dulwich resident.[3] As Culpin and Son, the firm went onto design Greenwich Town Hall and Poplar Town Hall, two of the most unashamedly Modern civic buildings erected in London in the 1930s, but Bowers design for Camberwell was altogether more traditional. His proposal was to reconstruct the town hall as five-storey building, with a basement, with the steel-framed additions clad in red brick with a stone base. After a notably rapid construction, taking under twelve months, the building reopened in 1934 having cost £50,000.[4]

The chief feature of the new front is a stone portico *in antis*, with square Composite columns, set over an arched entrance that is embellished by a carved keystone, depicting a ship's helm, and a pair of splendidly spiky lanterns. The large metal-framed windows that regularly punctuate the façade are replacements, of a similarly style to the original windows. No attempt was made

to disguise the retained façade of the vestry hall on the return elevation; instead its buff-coloured brickwork (its three storeys projecting slightly from the face of the later building) was cleaned and, were necessary, reworked.

The layout of the Bower's addition was inevitably circumscribed by the retained section of the earlier building. In the replaced front portion he reproduced Power's arrangement of a central entrance hall and the side stair, merely swapping its position from the east to west side. The interior itself was given a notably businesslike finish, plain apart from the modestly decorated principal spaces, with little in the way of 'civic display'. The marble-faced walls and arched ceiling of the entrance hall have survived the 1980 reworking of the ground floor, as has the main stair, a rather functional replacement, supplied with a lift in its central well. On the first floor, two (altered) committee rooms occupy the front, while a central corridor leads to the former vestry hall, now council chamber, with the mayor's parlour off it. The council chamber itself is an amalgam, retaining the coved ceiling and pilastered walls of the vestry hall, but with tiered oak seating in a semi-circular arrangement and a curved mayoral dais added in 1933.[5]

In the late 1960s the newly formed London Borough of Southwark, an amalgamation of the metropolitan boroughs of Southwark, Camberwell and Bermondsey, approved the idea of centralising its municipal offices in Peckham. An ambitious scheme by Robert Matthews, Johnson Marshall and Partners was devised over the next decade , around the same time they were designing Hillingdon Civic Centre. This glass-and-concrete complex was to have consisted of a shopping centre, library, public hall and council offices, dominating Peckham High Street. The adverse economic situation in the 1970s made this scheme unrealisable, thereby ensuring the continued use of the town hall at Camberwell (along with the municipal offices at Bermondsey and former vestry hall on Walworth Road). This building was given a 'face lift' in 1980, including the reworking of the reception area and a new ground floor committee room, which resulted in the loss of some of the original furniture and fittings.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 19th March 1998

NOTES

[1] *The Builder* 19 Aug 1871.

[2] Their handling of the competition caused one competition to complain that it was 'A gross piece of jobbery'. *The Builder* 16 Dec 1871, 991.

[3] *South London Press*, 10 Oct 1934.

[4] The general contractors were Galbraith Bros.

[5] For the original arrangement see the photograph (PC 223) in Southwark Local Studies Library

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The Metropolitan, 25 Oct 1873, 681

Cherry B and Pevsner N, *The Buildings of England London:2 South* (London 1994) 618

GREATER LONDON

NBR INDEX NO: 95890

TOWER HAMLETS

NGR: TQ 3498 8308

CAMBRIDGE HEATH ROAD/PATRIOT SQUARE

BETHNAL GREEN TOWN HALL

This Baroque Revival town hall was built in 1909-10 and then more than doubled in size in 1937-9 with an eastern extension. The building replaced a typically modest vestry hall of 1852 on St Matthews Row, built for the Commissioners for Improving the Parish and subsequently used by St Matthew's Vestry. The vestry had long desired a replacement, and in 1886 got as far as holding a limited competition, won by Isaacs & Florence with a neo-Classical design, for a site on Cambridge Heath Road and Paradise Row (near the present building). The intention was that this should be a building of some grandeur - a large public hall for 1,700 people was required - and the winning design featured a grand entrance, with a *porte cochere*, and a 'council room' for the vestry meetings. This room was conceived of as a 'parish parliament', connected to two committee rooms 'so arranged as to be available for division lobbies' (recalling the arrangement of the Houses of Parliament).[1] Although this scheme foundered, attempts to build a new town hall resumed in 1904, given greater urgency perhaps by the replacement of the Vestry with the Metropolitan Borough of Bethnal Green in 1900. Various locations were considered, including one on Bethnal Green Road, and the purchase of the present site was completed in 1908, the year after the competition for the new building had been held.

The 1907 competition was won by Percy Robinson and W. Alban Jones, the assessor being H.T. Hare, and their design was built, with some modifications, in 1909-10.[2] The general contractors for the building were Messrs Brand, Pettit and Co, Tottenham, and it cost £27,700 including furniture. Because the site is a narrow one, the two-storey building has only a short frontage to Cambridge Heath Road, with a long return to Patriot Square. Both elevations are faced in Portland stone and the pedimented façade is distinguished by an arched recess above the central entrance, a tall cupola, banded rustication and a heavy cornice. The enriched detailing that adorns the elevation includes a figural sculpture of Charity, by Henry Poole, placed over the doorway. The return elevation incorporates a Diocletian window, lighting the original council chamber, adorned with another Poole bas relief sculpture depicting Justice. Bethnal Green Town Hall's bold Baroque Revival treatment, its all-stone elevations and the abundance of decoration are a expression of the new civic sensibility fostered by the London Government Act of 1899, also evident in contemporary town halls at Woolwich, Deptford and Lambeth.

The internal arrangement of the town hall is conventional – with offices and a generous array of strong rooms in the basement, departmental offices on the ground floor, and a *piano nobile* devoted to the council chamber, committee rooms and mayor's parlour. The council chamber was placed in the eastern end, away from the street, and may have had a collegiate arrangement (opposing rows of seats) rather than the more common semi-circular or horseshoe plan.[3] The elliptically vaulted chamber included a decorative scheme with plaster figures by Poole, depicting Truth, Happiness, Industry and Temperance, and had a public gallery at its eastern end.

A suite of three committee rooms occupied the front of the building, with the mayor's parlour adjoining to the east. A grand processional route was supplied, with the front vestibule giving onto an entrance hall and open-well stair, rising to an upper lobby lit by a glazed dome. These spaces were highly finished with marble-clad pillars, a stair with solid-marble urn balusters, patterned floors, dado panelling and ornamented plaster ceilings.

The eastern extension, designed in 1936 by E.C.P. Monson, was larger than the existing building and duplicated its civic accommodation, providing a new council chamber, committee rooms, and ceremonial stair. The original scheme also included a public hall at its eastern end, but this was omitted when the addition came to be built in 1937-9, although the temporary character of the building's east elevation indicates that the hall's construction was postponed rather than abandoned. Monson's respectful extension is in a restrained neo-Classical style, in a similar manner to his Islington Town Hall of 1922-30. The building's elevation continues the cornice level of it neighbour, but with a heightened roof line to allow for a third storey. Its minimal ornamentation is perhaps due to the extension being on the east side of the earlier building, facing on to what was effectively a side street. However, some civic *gravitas* is supplied by a pedimented centre, which has a balcony over the main entrance incorporating a carved relief of the Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green, and three carved floral reliefs between the second and third storeys.

The interior of the extension is in the neo-Classical style but with touches of the Moderne. It has a central entrance hall and an imperial stair, with a solid balustrade and octagonal piers, faced in different shades of marble with Art Deco uplighters on the walls and piers. The most traditional treatment is reserved for the self-contained council chamber and ante room which is placed to the south side of the main building, and separated from it by an area. The chamber has dado panelling, heraldic glass in the windows and fixed seating (of Australian walnut wood) in a horseshoe plan. However, the suite of three committee rooms is rather less old fashioned, with sleek maple veneer panelling detailed with raised bands. These have retractable partition walls that incorporate doorways, to allow for intercommunication between rooms when the partitions are closed (an uncommon arrangement). The mayor's parlour has similarly styled mahogany panelling, incorporating built-in cupboards and shelving, as well as a marble-faced fire surround. The 1909-10 building underwent some remodelling at the same time as the extension was being built. The superseded parlour and committee rooms were converted to offices, but the former council chamber was more significantly reworked. These alterations included the enclosing of the public gallery and the subdivision of the chamber to create a new corridor to link the old building to the new.

Bethnal Green Town Hall continued in municipal use for several decades after the formation of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets in 1965. The decision to move the council's headquarters to a commercial office building in the Docklands in 1993 left the building surplus to requirements, and it was put up for sale that same year. In 2000 it remains unoccupied and seeking a new use.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by James Davies
Recorded 18th August 1993

NOTES

[1] *Building News*, 25 Mar 1887.

[2] See the *Building News*, 18 Oct 1907 for the competition winning plan and *Academy Architecture* 1901 vol I, for a slightly more ornate elevational treatment.

[3] This is the arrangement shown in the *Building News*, 18 Oct 1907.

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Building News, 25 March 1887 (illn); 18 Oct 1907 (illn); 4 Nov 1910.

GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95891

TOWER HAMLETS NGR: TQ 3758 8293

BOW ROAD

BOW HOUSE (FORMERLY POPLAR TOWN HALL)

This building was proclaimed by Poplar Borough Council, with some justification, as the first town hall in London on 'truly modern' lines at the time of its opening. It was built in 1937-8 to the designs of the young architect Clifford Culpin, who was given responsiblity by his father and partner Ewart Culpin for both this and the contemporaneous Greenwich Town Hall. The council had specified 'no extraneous ornament', but its streamlined bowed front and continuous bands of glazing alternating with stone facing panels were visually more akin to the commercial and industrial buildings of Erich Mendelsohn and Owen Williams than to the usual contemporary municipal buildings. Nor are there any of the Scandinavian or Dutch influences that so influenced the town halls of Hornsey, Wembley and Culpin's own design for Greenwich. The building at Poplar has an unusual trapezoid plan dictated by the awkward site, part of which had been occupied by a modest Italianate vestry hall built c1868. This arrangement was inherited by Culpin from his father's former partner Bowers, who had devised a more traditional scheme following the appointment of the firm in 1933. Each of the three functional areas - the municipal offices, council chamber, and public hall - occupied respectively the front, middle and rear portions of the building and were given separate entrances. Although its industralised 'modern workshop' approach stressed simplicity and flexibility, the steel-framed building did not lack for civic pride, expressed primarily in the remarkable collection of external and internal decoration. These include carvings, mosaics, etched-glass panels and a mural of a high standard, foremost of which are the five exterior stone panels by David Evans symbolising the trades and professions employed in the actual building. The town hall remained in public use after the 1965 local government reforms until the mid 1980s. Some alterations occurred as a result of these changes, most notably the reworking of the council chamber to form a canteen. A speculative conversion for intended commercial use resulted in some alterations in the early 1990s of a largely sympathetic nature. However, the public hall remains unused and under threat of demolition.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by James Davies
Recorded 3rd August 1993

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 98893

TOWER HAMLETS NGR: TQ 3748 8286

BOW ROAD

BROMLEY PUBLIC HALL (FORMERLY VESTRY HALL)

The construction of this building of 1879 perhaps epitomises the many vestry halls of the 1860s and 70s that collectively symbolised the growing importance of the vestries, the increasing size of their membership and their right to levy rates for municipal undertakings - namely the provision of much needed meeting space and offices. As early as December 1870 the members of Bromley St. Leonard's vestry, dissatisfied with the size of the existing building, met to "consider a proposition to erect a new vestry-hall for the parish", but it was not until May 1879 that the foundation stone was officially laid.[1] By this date all other neighbouring parishes in east London could "boast of a suitable meeting-place for their local parliaments, and all of them, excepting Limehouse, pride themselves upon being in a position to afford accommodation for large gatherings of the ratepayers in capacious halls attached to their parochial buildings".[2] However, Bromley seems to have suffered from vociferous opposition from the ratepayers, and the years immediately preceding the building's construction appear to have witnessed a propaganda campaign, articulated in part through eye-catching fly-posters.[3]

Bromley Vestry Hall was built to the designs of Arthur and Christopher Harston on a site formerly occupied by Mrs. Bowrey's almshouses, by J. and H. Cocks[4] for £5,266. It typified the symmetrical planning, modest size and unassuming exterior treatment of so many of London's vestry halls. Virtually all visual emphasis is concentrated on the two-storey Portland-stone-faced façade, which employs a standard array of Italianate motifs to enliven its appearance, including round-arched windows, composite and Corinthian pilasters and balustraded parapets. The side elevations were, by contrast, almost entirely in stock brick, and were, with the exception of the the rear portion of the building, unfenestrated. The internal layout of the building was straightforward: on the ground-floor were offices, flanking either side of a central hall leading to a committee room at the rear, and on the first-floor a board room – possibly also used for public gatherings from the outset – occupied the whole front or main portion of the building. The rear portion of the building, built as three-storeys, housed a waiting room, lavatory and housekeeper's apartments.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 27th August 1998

NOTES

1. *The Builder*, 31 December 1870, 1050.

2. *Ibid*, 7 June 1879, 640.

3. Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives (Bancroft Library), file on Bromley Vestry Hall filed under

722.2.

4. *The Builder*, 25 January 1879, 111. The almshouses were sold by auction for demolition to the churchwardens and overseers of Bromley St. Leonard in January 1879.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 93871

TOWER HAMLETS NGR: TQ 3670 8108

COMMERCIAL ROAD

LIMEHOUSE TOWN HALL (FORMERLY LIMEHOUSE VESTRY HALL)

Observing that if provincial towns of 5,000 - 10,000 inhabitants could boast of spacious town halls, one Mr Hopson, a vocal member of Limehouse Vestry, asserted in 1875 that Limehouse ought to have one as well. In his view, 'possession of a town-hall of proper capacity would dignify the public proceedings of the Board'.[1] The vestry were unanimous in their support for the venture, although the majority voted against Hopson's motion for engaging a 'professional gentleman' to select the site, choosing instead to leave that decision to the churchwardens and overseers - a cheaper alternative. A conspicuous site on the eastern end of Commercial road, adjacent to the parish church was chosen for the building. This was to be built to the designs of East London's most prolific architects in the field of municipal buildings, Arthur and Christopher Harston. In keeping with other vestries - all instinctively cost-conscious bodies - the subject of expenditure was thoroughly discussed. At an anticipated cost of between £8,000 and £9,000, Limehouse Vestry's new municipal building was significantly more expensive than some of the comparable buildings in the East End, including Poplar Board of Works Hall (£7,330), Poplar town hall (£7,500), and Limehouse Board of Works Hall (£5,172). In the event, the expense was justified on the grounds that the 'intelligent ratepayer' would understand that revenue would accrue from the hire of the public hall, and that repayments of the sum borrowed from the Metropolitan Board of Works would be spread over a long period.[2] The foundation stone was laid on 21 October 1879 and the building, which opened on 29 March 1881, was built by J.H. Johnson, a contractor whose tender was >nearly approximate to the amount in the hands of the officers.[3] The final cost of the building was some £10,000.

Limehouse vestry hall was built in typically Italianate mode; a white-brick two-storey building enlivened with white stone dressings, a shallow porch with paired pillars, and a parapet boasting a central pediment with cartouche. In internal arrangement it is equally orthodox: a simple rectangular plan arranged symmetrically around an axial hall with a rear stair linking the two floors. The ground floor housed a vestry board room, committee room and offices, and the first floor was substantially taken up by a comparatively lavish (by local standards) public hall, with two small retiring rooms at the rear. The committee room and public hall survive relatively unaltered, the latter unusually equipped with a small internal balcony on wrought-iron brackets in addition to the usual public gallery. The public hall was designed to accommodate some 460 persons, and could be reached by a separate stone staircase at the southwest angle from Church Row. In April 1890, it was licensed for music and dancing by the London County Council - an additional function that was granted on the understanding that the existing stone stair was to be reinforced. The ornate wrought iron balusters and wrought-iron - or possibly steel- girders and trough-flooring that provides additional support to the cantilevered upper return flights, almost certainly date from this time.

In 1900 the vestry hall officially became a town hall, following the creation of Limehouse Metropolitan Borough in that year. Ironically, Limehouse Vestry had originally thought of the building in those terms; a malapropism that prompted The Builder to note in 1878, when reporting progress on the building, 'A Town-hall' in this and some other metropolitan instances is simply Vestry-hall '*writ large*'.. It continued in this use until 1965, when the amalgamation of this and other neighboring boroughs to form the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, demoted the building to administrative offices. The building currently remains vacant, used for storage of council documents.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 23rd February 1999

NOTES

1. *The Builder*, 13 March 1875, 241.

2. *The Builder*, 16 November 1878, 1197.

3. *The Builder*, 2 August 1879, 868.

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95869

TOWER HAMLETS NGR: TQ 3590 8236

BANCROFT ROAD

TOWER HAMLETS LIBRARY (FORMERLY MILE END VESTRY HALL)

SUMMARY

The earliest part of this classically styled stone-faced building was erected for the vestry of the Hamlet of Mile End Old Town in 1860-1 to the designs of the vestry surveyor James Knight. A rear extension was added in 1905-6, soon after the building's conversion to public library use. The architect of the extension was M W James, the borough engineer of Stepney Metropolitan Council, which replaced the vestry in 1900. This was augmented in 1936-7 by an addition that all but doubled the building's frontage on Bancroft Road, designed by Bernard Belsher.

REPORT

The Vestry of the Hamlet of Mile End Old Town, formed from the parish of St Dunstan, Stepney in 1856, aspired from the outset to provide itself with purpose-built accommodation, claiming that 'much of the disorder for which parish meetings have been so notorious has arisen from the want of proper convenience for meeting'.[1] Few of the new or reformed local government bodies in London, brought into being by the Metropolitan Management Act of 1855, had access to adequate or appropriate accommodation, most having to meet in a medley of *ad hoc* spaces such as hired rooms or workhouse boardrooms. It was this legislation, along with new opportunities for financing the construction of such buildings by loans from central government, that prompted the rash of vestry halls that appeared throughout London from the 1860s onwards. Mile End Vestry Hall and its exact contemporary, built for the Vestry of St George in the East, on Cable Street, were the first to be built in London's notorious East End, and seem to have set the pattern that was followed by the many of the neighbouring vestries.[2] In Mile End a site adjoining the newly completed workhouse on Bancroft Road was purchased from the guardians in 1860.[3] Construction began in 1860 and was completed the following year, at a cost of £4758

Knight's building was a simple rectangular structure of two storeys, centrally planned, with a principal elevation in the style of a Renaissance palazzo. This elevation now forms the northern half of the stone-faced façade. It has a rusticated ground floor with a central entrance, Tuscan pilasters and round-headed windows with enriched keystones. The first floor has three-light arched windows, separated by fluted Corinthian pilasters, below a heavy eaves cornice. However, it lacks the enriched detailing shown in a published view of 1862.[4] This façade originally boasted a large entrance porch 'consisting of eight columns in antis and a flight of Portland stone steps', that has subsequently been removed.[5] The 1930s addition by James is in the same manner but less ornate, repeating the rusticated ground floor but with round-headed first-floor windows with enriched keystones, and simple wreaths decorating the frieze.

The ground floor of the original vestry hall had an entrance hall, 'of noble dimensions', with the offices of the clerk, surveyor, medical officer and inspector of nuisance arrayed off it. Adjoining

the clerks' offices were committee rooms; at the rear a stone stair led to a vestry hall on the first floor. The stair had a 'flight of seven moulded stone steps, terminating on a landing ... from which spring two other moulded stone staircases-one for the use of the members of the Vestry, the other for the use of the general ratepayers'.[6] An early account of the first-floor vestry room described it as 'a magnificent room, 54ft by 36ft and 21ft high, to the springing of the ceiling, which is eliptical'.[7] The cornice of the room was enriched with medallions - copies of the seals of the Vestry and Board of Guardians. It was also provided with three fireplaces, a generous number justified at the time because 'the open grate is the most comfortable mode of heating an apartment, and affords better ventilation'.[8] Two sunburners were supplied for lighting and ventilation and the room had oak furniture, covered with 'hair cloth'.[9] The remainder of the first floor was occupied by the hall keeper's accommodation, lavatories and other necessary facilities. There was a small basement housing a muniment room and a fuel store. The reworking of the building in the 1930s has largely effaced this layout on the ground floor, the only surviving room being the former clerks office in the north west corner.

After the formation of Stepney Borough Council in 1900 it was decided to convert the former vestry hall into a public library, accomplished in 1901-2. In 1905-6 the borough surveryor M W James designed a rear extension, to be built on the site of a disused mortuary and yard. This addition, paid for by a grant of £6000 from Andrew Carnegie, contained a ground floor lecture hall and a highly decorated reference library on the first floor. The former vestry hall became first a reading room and then, in 1912, a lending library. This lending library was partly operated on an 'open access' arrangement, an early example of the use of this American-derived system in London. In 1933 the council purchased the adjoining piece of land and in 1936 Bernard Belsher drew up the proposals for a remodelled and enlarged building. In 1937 the library was formally re-opened by Walter de la Mare with a new children's library on the ground floor, and an enlarged lending library on the first floor. The latter space, formerly the vestry hall, was actually doubled in length and decorated in the same manner as the original room. As part of the remodelling the original stair was removed, and a more functional replacement was built adjoining the expanded entrance hall, which was given four Doric columns. James' reference library was slightly altered, principally to allow for access to the extension. The building still remains in library use (and since1965 has housed the Tower Hamlets Local Studies Library).

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 27th July 1998

NOTES

[1] *East London Observer and Tower Hamlets Chronicle,* 6 July 1861

[2] Similar buildings were erected at Hackney (1864-6) NBR Index no: 95831, Shoreditch (1866-7) NBR Index no: 95885, Limehouse (1879-81) NBR Index no: 93871, Bromley (1879) NBR Index no: 98893.

[3] For the history of Mile End Old Town Workhouse see NBR Index no: 101167.

[4] *The Builder,* 8 March 1862.

[5] *East London Observer* 1861

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid

[9] Hackney Archives Department, Town Hall Committee Minutes, 1862 BW/T/1.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95870

SOUTHWARK NGR: TQ 3483 8090

SPA ROAD

ST. GEORGES-IN-THE-EAST VESTRY HALL

This two-storey building was built in 1860 to the Italianate designs of Andrew Wilson. One the first of the post-Metropolitan Management Act (1855) East End Vestry Halls, it embodies many of the stylistic and planning features that characterise this building type. Measuring approximately 57 feet by 60 feet, it was constructed to an almost square plan with open courts separating the rear third of the building from the important spaces at the front. The principal feature of the five bay Portland stone façade is the porch which has banded Doric columns and rusticated pilasters supporting an entablature with triglyphed frieze. When originally built, the side elevations (east and west) were abutted by buildings[1], and for this reason both the ground floor and first floor plans, as published in *The Building News*[2], were not fenestrated. The visible west elevation, which has not been significantly masked by subsequent additions, thus presents a plain brick exterior in English bond, albeit recently enlivened by an eye-catching mural depicting the 'Battle of Cable Street' of 1936.

Internally, much of the original vestry hall structure remains substantially unaltered. On the ground floor, the various departmental offices were arranged symmetrically to either side of the vestibule and stair hall. The entrance hall is typically elaborate for the period: Doric pilasters and entablature supporting a panelled, coffered and moulded ceiling, and a double-return staircase with cast-iron balustrade. This decorative scheme is continued in the stair hall, where the first-floor landing has a coffered ceiling panel, with an enriched flower in the centre. On the first floor, the whole front of the building was given over to the 'Principal hall and Board-room' or vestry hall. Here, the original rich Italianate decor - notably the moulded wall panels set between Roman Ionic Pilasters, panelled dado, coffered and panelled ceiling - survives intact. A public gallery, which seated 100 people in two tiers, ran the entire length of the back wall, reached by an independent stone staircase. This gallery was removed in 1899 when the building wad extended. The present public gallery against the east wall has a decorative cast-iron balustrade extending the width of the hall, but the original seating has been lost. Probably in the late 20th-century, a wall was built under the gallery with two sets of double doors in an historisized style reminiscent of the original joinery. The rear portion of this floor was occupied by the committee room, cloak room and lavatory. The basement floor provided accommodation for the hall-keeper and service equipment, consisting of parlour, kitchen, scullery, coal place, pantry, cellars, strong-room and a boiler-room for the hot water system. The basement ceiling was formed of brick jack-arches springing from cast-iron girders with the haunches infilled with concrete so that it could withstand the weight of the Portland stone floor above.

In 1899 the Vestry Hall was extended eastwards by three bays in identical style to the existing work, and various minor internal alterations and remodelling was carried out. These changes are commemorated in a plaque in the ground floor stair hall inscribed AThis Vestry Hall was enlarged and reopened 18th December 1899". In terms of planning, the chief gains were the creation of a Coroners Court on the ground floor, an enlarged vestry hall capable of seating 420

persons with attendant large staircase for the (resited) public gallery, and a slight increase in both the size and number of various rooms and offices.

The extended vestry hall faithfully reproduced the original decorative scheme, and the coved ceiling with sunburner's, pilasters and cornice remain exceptionally well preserved. Late 20th-century changes include the raising of the rear of the building by a further storey to provide additional office space, and the removal of the stairs leading to the Public Gallery. These alterations reflect the shift from a municipal to a commercial use of the building, the consequence of post-1965 local government reforms. The conversion of, chiefly, the first floor committee room and public gallery to modern, open plan office space with attendant light partitions etc., was probably carried out in the 1990s.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker and Derek Kendall
Recorded 24 July 1998

NOTES

1. Second Edition 1:2500 OS Map (1894) shows three terraced houses to the west, and an undisclosed rectangular building to the east.

2. *The Building News*, 3 January 1862, 4.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 98896

WALTHAM FOREST NGR: TQ 382 942

THE RIDGEWAY

CHINGFORD MUNICIPAL OFFICES

This small two-storey neo-Baroque town hall was built to the designs of Frank Nash and H.T. Bonner and officially opened on 12 December 1929. It was built for Chingford Urban District Council, who's more ambitious plans of 1926 (that included a fire station and public hall) were defeated. The builders were William Griffiths, Sons & Cromwell Ltd. It has a double-height council chamber on the first floor, complete with small public gallery, now used as offices.

In 1959-60 an additional U-shaped range of two-storey offices was built to the designs of Tooley and Foster. Also in red brick, this otherwise functional addition is given some distinction by corrugated concrete eaves cornice, and inside the entrance hall, a terrazzo floor inlaid with a grid-pattern of brass. It was built by Gray Conoley & Co. Ltd., builders, and opened by J.A. Cooper, Mayor of Chingford, on 12 November 1960.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 23rd September 1998

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95893

WALTHAM FOREST NGR: TQ 3820 8630

HIGH ROAD LEYTON/ADELAIDE ROAD/RUCKHOLT ROAD

LEYTON TOWN HALL AND LIBRARY (FORMERLY LEYTON TOWN HALL)

SUMMARY

Leyton's first town hall, designed by John M. Knight (the surveyor to Mile End Vestry), opened in 1882. Built on the junction of the High Road, Leyton and Ruckholt Road for Leyton Local Board, this Italianate building was soon outgrown by the expanding administration, replaced in 1894 by an urban district council. In 1896 a new town hall was completed on an adjoining site and the superseded building was converted to library use. The replacement was an eclectically styled edifice designed by John Johnson that incorporated a technical college in a rear range on Adelaide Road. The town hall reached its present extent in 1910 when a side wing facing onto Ruckholt Road was built.

REPORT

The impetus behind such a rapid expansion of local authority accommodation lies in the broader development of the area. Leyton had remained little more than an Essex forest village well into the nineteenth century, but from the 1860s it had experienced an accelerating growth that reached almost unprecedented proportions in the last decades of the century. Prior to the construction of the town hall in 1881-2 the local board had met in the vestry room of the local church. Their new building comprised a three-storey Italianate edifice, of Suffolk gault brick and rather elaborate Portland stone dressings, with two main frontages and a corner tower. The pedimented main entrance was in the tower, which was finished by a steep pavilion roof. The ground floor contained the offices and a large committee room, whilst a generously sized boardroom was placed on the first floor, reached by a wide stone stair. The position of the boardroom, which doubled as a public hall, was marked externally by two large pedimented two-light windows. The building has remained in library use since its conversion in 1896-7 by William Dawson, surveyor to the council. Its exterior, which remains essentially as built, was restored in 1994.

In 1893 the local board (soon to be replaced by an urban district council) held a competition for a new building combining offices and a technical institute. The first premium was awarded to John Johnson and his design was built in 1895-6 by F J Coxhead of Leytonstone. The building is of red brick with white stone dressings, in an eclectic style, mixing the Italianate with Baroque and Gothic flourishes. Its two main elevations are divided into separate elements but given a degree of unity by the consistent use of horizontal stone banding to the ground floors of both façades. The corner of the L-shaped building is treated as a single two-storey block, with two lower wings to either elevation. This main façade of this higher block faces onto the High Road and has an ornate Ionic entrance porch, a blind arcade to the first floor with an enriched frieze cornice and gable above, and octagonal corner towers with pinnacles. The pitched slate-tiled roof is adorned with a wood and glass *flêche.* The return elevation of this taller section on

Adelaide Road is only slightly less ornate, given the same first-floor arcade, but open to allow for the presence of large round-headed windows to light the assembly hall beyond. The lower section of the High Road frontage is of three storeys and has a three-sided full-height pedimented bay window at its eastern end. On Adelaide Road the façade of the former technical college has two storeys with a basement, the upper storey originally blind but now with some inserted windows. This section of the building has a pitched roof that breaks towards the ridge for lantern lights. At the centre is a projecting Ionic entrance porch to its centre, set above which is a panel representing Engineering, carved by a Mr Woodington. This frontage is linked to the higher section by a two-storey projecting bay housing a dedicated entrance to the assembly hall.

Internally, Johnson did not provide the clear separation of the functional areas that the external treatment implies. Instead, the departmental offices seem to have been spread around the ground floor, including the wing containing the technical school. A committee room with its own waiting room and anteroom was also provided at this level. The High Road entrance led to a vestibule and dog-leg stair, for access to the first-floor assembly hall and what later became the mayoral suite in the eastern section of the building. Additionally, two other stairs were provided, one midway along the Adelaide Road block and another at its eastern end, its two flights returning as a single flight over the entrance that leads to the assembly hall. The basements contained offices and store rooms below the High Road block, and classrooms in the rear school range. By the standards of nearby contemporary town halls such as East Ham or Ilford, Leyton has a rather modest interior. The main architectural effort was concentrated in the assembly hall, given a coved ceiling with some plaster decoration, Corinthian pilasters to the walls, and a polished oak floor. The present stage is apparently a later insertion although some sort of platform may have originally been provided. Elsewhere the finish is even more modest, with simple plasterwork (restored after fire damage in the 1990s) and mosaic floors in the entrance hall and main corridors, and cast-iron decorative panels to the stair balustrades.

When newly complete, the town hall accommodated a staff of less than 20 but this number soon expanded as the authority's powers increased over the following decade. Meanwhile, Leyton continued to grow at a rapid rate, requiring a redivision of wards and a commensurate increase in number of council members. As a consequence the town hall had to be significantly enlarged in 1910 with a new wing fronting onto Ruckholt Road. This was built of red brick with stone dressings in a Baroque Revival style. The ground floor is rusticated, as is the giant central arched niche that rises through the cornice, and the upper storey has blind brickwork. Barely visible from the street, is a small wooden cupola in the centre of the roof. This addition consisted of offices on the ground floor and a saucer-domed council chamber with Ionic columns on the first floor. A new stair was provided, with chunky stone balusters, and a bridge was made across to the earlier building from the stair landing to link the old and the new.

In 1938 the council took over the technical college and converted its classrooms into offices. Some rooms, such as the former art classroom on the first floor (now the canteen), still retain such typical features as the decorated wooden roof trusses and northern lantern lights. The building continued as the main civic building of the area until local government reforms in 1965 merged Leyton, Walthamstow and Chingford to form the London Borough of Waltham Forest. Whilst the succeeding authority has retained Leyton Town Hall for municipal use, it opted to hold its council meetings at Walthamstow, and as a consequence the building has suffered the inevitable loss of fittings in the principal rooms - the council chamber and mayor's parlour.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by James Davies
Recorded 3rd March 1994

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GREATER LONDON

NBR INDEX NO: 95875

WALTHAM FOREST

NGR: TQ 3770 8990

FOREST ROAD

WALTHAMSTOW TOWN HALL

A monumental building within an impressive formally landscaped setting, to many Walthamstow Town Hall epitomises the stripped-classical idiom of the 1930s. The arrangement of the building, which from the outset was intended to form part of a municipal group including a separate assembly hall and law courts, underwent significant modification from P D Hepworth's competition winning scheme of 1932. This had the three elements planned along a single axis, but by the time building started in 1937 this had been replanned with the units ranged around three sides of a rectangle, with the fourth side left open for the main approach. Stylistically, Hepworth's original scheme was more squarely classical, with a pedimented central portico, a channelled or rusticated ground floor and a heavy cornice line giving it great horizontal emphasis. These more traditional elements were eventually stripped away in favour of a more attenuated form of continental classicism, refined in Scandinavia in the 1920s and still popular throughout central Europe in the 1930s. The result was a 'cleaner' facade, with deeply projecting end bays, dominated by a central portico of lofty unmoulded square piers with a copper-clad *fleche* above. Another revision that contributes to the town hall's undoubted visual impact was the decision to upgrade the load-bearing external walls from part brick to wholly Portland stone.

Although construction had commenced in 1937 only the carcases of the town hall and the assembly block had been finished when war was declared in 1939. The town hall was occupied in an unfinished condition in 1941, and the assembly hall was opened as a municipal meal centre in 1942. The stringent wartime conditions necessitated a reduction in external decoration and internal finishes. Nonetheless, the front portico was given six bas-relief plaques and the outside of the council chamber was adorned with carved figures sculpted by John F Cavanagh (the head of 'Fellowship' being modelled on William Morris).[1] The symmetrically planned building has a polygonal council chamber projecting to the rear, but more unusually, the expected ceremonial staircase was omitted. Instead four smaller stairs were provided, two at either end of the axial central corridor, and another pair flanking the entrance hall (that to the east now replaced by a lift). This allowed space for a larger number of committee rooms (five generously sized rooms when completed) than was the norm. These, along with the mayor's parlour and members rooms and the council chamber, took up the whole of the central section of the first floor, with the offices being placed in the end bays and on the ground floor. This suite of rooms survive in good order, although some of the room uses have been changed. Although wartime economies meant that these spaces were more simply finished than intended, with plain plywood panelling in the committee rooms, and plain painted iron where bronze had been intended, the jazzy Art Deco detailing in these areas is a delight. The council chamber has resited Victorian furniture, originally a temporary wartime measure, within a stylised classical setting, typified by the debased Ionic columns topped with uplighters to the panelled walls. This almost playful approach is also expressed in the dainty metalwork of the external balconies and the stair balustrades. [2]

The civic complex at Walthamstow, which was laid out with a forecourt containing a circular pond, 100ft in diameter, remained uncompleted until 1971 when the long projected law courts were finally built. Hepworth had designed this block as a mirror of the porticoed assembly hall, but it was built as an uncompromisingly modern structure, designed by K Krumins.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 23rd September 1998

NOTES

[1] Cavanagh also designed a 40ft frieze for the front elevation.

[2] The ornamental plasterwork of the ceiling of the ground floor rates office incorporates the letters L S D (pounds, shillings, pence) within its pattern.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO 95877

WANDSWORTH NGR: TQ 2785 7562

LAVENDER HILL

BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE (FORMERLY BATTERSEA TOWN HALL)

'Battersea, as befits its position as an intensely municipal borough, has a very handsome Town Hall'. [1]

SUMMARY
Built for a Progressive authority on a prominent location, this confident and well-designed municipal building of 1892-3 heralded the maturity of local government architecture in London. Designed by Edward Mountford in a Free Classical style, the brick-and-stone building is also one of the forerunners of the English Baroque revival that so dominated public architecture in the Edwardian period. The building contained both council offices and a large public hall, placed at the rear. The redevelopment of the building was proposed after council functions shifted to Wandsworth in 1965, but it was reprieved for community use. It has latterly been run as an arts centre, following a sympathetic conversion in the 1980s.

REPORT
Although some discussion about building new accommodation for the vestry of St Mary Battersea had occurred in the late 1870s the impetus seems to have been lost until 1887, when the populous area secured autonomy from Wandsworth District Board of Works, and the reformed and revitalised vestry initiated a campaign of municipal building activity. In 1891 the vestry voted to build a new town hall and the Elm House estate on Lavender Hill was purchased. A limited competition was held the same year, although only 12 of the 24 invited architects submitted designs. The vestry followed the recommendation of the assessor, William Young, and awarded first premium to Edward Mountford's design. Mountford was then an up and coming architect, having recently designed several local public buildings including Battersea Polytechnic and a Public Library (also on Lavender Hill), as well as Sheffield Town Hall. These buildings were in a variety of eclectic styles, but the Baroque sensibility of Battersea Town Hall is indicative of a move towards the full-blooded Baroque Revival, later used so successfully by Mountford in his most famous building, the Central Criminal Courts (Old Bailey) of 1900-6.

Construction of the town hall by the general contractors, Walter Wallis of Balham, began in 1892, its estimated cost being £42,000, including fittings. The foundation stone was laid in November of that year, in attendance was the Progessive MP for Battersea, John Burns, whose indirect role in promoting the building of the town hall was alluded to at the time 'Without actually taking part in the administration of local affairs he has been in the thick of the (reform) movement, and has given an impetus to the desire for better civic government which has been felt beyond the circle of his own immediate followers'.[2] The building was completed in good time, the vestry having continued work through the winter to help relieve unemployment, and was formerly opened by Lord Rosebery on the 15th November 1893.

The local government buildings erected in London in the middle decades of the 19th century were characteristically modest or businesslike structures with little in the way of civic decoration but, as the initial parsimony of the vestries gradually gave way to a greater civic consciousness, a more appreciably municipal architecture began to emerge in the latter part of the century. Battersea Town Hall was perhaps the most accomplished example of this trend. Mountford exploited the opportunity provided by the site for an impressive frontage, designing a symmetrical facade, of red brick dressed with Bath stone, in an eclectic Classical manner that draws on the Baroque and the Jacobean styles. There is a bold semi-circular porch with a balcony and a central cupola above. The ground floor is of stone, as are the Ionic columns and shaped pediments of the centre and projecting end bays, and the balustraded parapet. The front range has a hipped tiled roof, with end turrets with ball finials, and two tall chimneys. The pediments and spandrels are enriched with reliefs carved by Paul R Montford - those panels in the end bays depicting Labour and Progress (to the east) and Art and Literature (to the west) instructing a youthful figure representing Battersea. The central relief has the arms of Battersea supported by Justice and Prudence, with Government and Entertainment on the spandrels below. No other town hall in London could then have equalled this didactic display.[3] The side elevations, predominantly of brick with some stone dressing, are in two sections, reflecting the different functional areas of the building. The single-storey entrance block for the public hall is midway along the east elevation, preceded by an elaborate iron-and-glass canopy.

When planning the building, Mountford turned the difficulties of the sloping oblong-shaped site to his advantage by placing the offices in the front part of the building with the public hall behind. Part of the site's frontage was given up to allow for a new road along the east side of the building, giving separate access to the hall and other areas although this meant the abandonment of a *porte cochére*, shown on the original scheme. There were other minor amendments to Mountford's competition-winning design, including the addition of further exits to the public hall and the reworking of the hall entrance. Some of the alterations were made at the suggestion of the 'resourceful Vestry clerk' C J Byworth, to avoid 'the faults of construction and arrangements discovered in similar institutions in London'.[4] In practice this meant arranging the hall and offices so that they could be operated separately from one another, and providing separate entrances to the different functional areas of the building, including independent access to the rates hall on the west side - as one newspaper commented, so that 'No one will have to withhold their rates on the ground that there is not proper facilities for paying them'.[5] Circulation around the building was facilitated by wide and well-lit corridors and a grand staircase, leading from the entrance hall to the council chamber, provided its ceremonial set piece. The design was also forward-looking in allowing space for expansion in the single-storey west wing.

Internally, there was no diminution of quality in the treatment of the principal spaces. The vestibule and entrance hall are detailed, like the exterior, in Bath stone. These areas have mosaic floors, made and laid by the Vitreous Mosaic Co., that are adorned with the motif of an industrious bee. The generously sized stair has Sicilian marble steps, with strings and handrails of Devonshire marble and balusters of Devonshire spar. Its upper level has galleries on three sides, with groined ceilings and marble balustrades, offering 'opportunities to linger, talk or observe all the comings and goings'.[6] The stairs are lit from above by a skylight, framed by a deep enriched frieze of fibrous plaster (by Gilbert Seale). The offices of the various departments were placed on the ground floor, arrayed off wide corridors leading from the entrance hall. The council chamber was placed on the first floor to the front. This had oak panelling and a

segmental barrel-vaulted ceiling enriched with fibrous plaster decoration, with fixed seating of oak and a gallery at the east end. Flanking the chamber were a members' library to the east and a grand committee room to the west, both with oak fittings and chimney pieces of Russet marble and Hopton Wood stone.

The public hall strikes an even more opulent note, with its own octagonal entrance hall lit by a glass-dome supported on columns of Devonshire marble. It has an enriched plaster frieze adorned with a quotation from Shakespeare's Richard II (against a background of oak and vine leaves executed by Gilbert Seale) that runs thus :–

> *"The purest treasure mortal times afford,*
> *Is spotless reputation; that away,*
> *Men are but gilded loam, or painted clay.*
>
> *Mine honour is my life; both grow in one."*

Further plaster embellishment decorates the elliptically vaulted hall, planned on a grand scale to accommodate 1140 people. The stage is presently flanked by an organ, added in 1901. The vestry, ever mindful of its improving role, intended that this hall should be let 'for Concerts, Bazaars, Debating Societies, University Extension Lectures and Recreative entertainments of a high-class for the people, all such uses being conducive to the well-being of the Inhabitants'.[7]

During its period of municipal use the building underwent only piecemeal alterations, such as the raising of the west wing to two storeys and the reworking of the minor hall beneath the main auditorium. But a more serious threat to the building emerged after Battersea and Wandsworth Metropolitan Boroughs were merged in 1965 to form the London Borough of Wandsworth and Battersea Town Hall lost its municipal role. Wandsworth had hopes of using the site of the building for a local museum and library annexe (to this end plans were drawn up in 1967 by the Borough Architect L. Philips) but a vigorous campaign, supported by Poet Laureate John Betjemen, saved the building for communal use. Reopened as a community centre in 1974 by Hugh Jenkins, the building's reprieve proved short lived as local government funding cuts forced it closure in 1979.[8] Following a period of uncertainty the former town hall was reopened in 1981 as Battersea Arts Centre, run by an independent trust. This change of use has necessitated certain alterations to the building, although these have been largely tactful and sympathetic to its original character. The council chamber has been converted into the main theatre by the simple means of removing the furniture and painting the walls and ceiling black, thereby retaining many of the original features. The borough surveyor's office on the ground floor has become a cafe (refurbished in the late 1990s), and the former drawing office a cinema. A gallery has been created from the members' library and cloak room, with the original chimneypieces inventively recycled as door surrounds. The town clerks office has been reworked to form a small performance space called Studio One, opened in 1985.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Derek Kendall
Recorded 16th December 1998

NOTES

[1] *The London Argus*, 26th March 1904, 1091.

[2] *London*, 20 April 1893, 182.

[3] Croydon Corporation built a grand town hall, with appropriately municipal decoration, in 1892-6, but this was in part a declaration of civic independence by an authority then outside of London. After the reform of 1900 civic decoration became more common, for example Shoreditch Town Hall extension, 1901-3.

[4] *London*, 20 April 1893, 182.

[5] Ibid.

[6] *Design for Special Needs*, issue no. 37, May/August 1985.

[7] 'Programme for the Inauguration of the New Municipal Buildings and Town Hall', 15 Nov 1893. Wandsworth Local Studies Library.

[8] Some minor refurbishment of the toilets and bar area of the public hall seems to have been undertaken during this period.

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95876

WANDSWORTH NGR: TQ 2580 7470

WANDSWORTH HIGH STREET

WANDSWORTH TOWN HALL AND COUNCIL OFFICES

SUMMARY
This complex of civic buildings is the result of four distinct phases of expansion and rebuilding spanning over a century. It began with the town hall, built by Wandsworth Vestry in 1880-2 to designs by George Patrick (subsequently demolished in the 1970s). A road-widening scheme in the 1920s provided an opportunity for a reconsideration of the building and resulted in the extension by the Borough Surveyor Ernest J Elford, carried out in 1926-7. This was greatly augmented in 1935-7 when Wandsworth Borough Council put up the Moderne-style office block by Edward H Hunt on an adjoining site. The complex assumed its present form in 1975 when Culpin & Partners' modern office extension was opened on the site of the Victorian town hall.

REPORT

The decision to erect a purpose-built vestry hall was first made in 1877, for despite being a wealthy parish, Wandsworth Vestry was then meeting in the vestry room of All Saints Church 'by sufferance of the vicar and churchwardens'.[1] The highly cost-conscious vestry hoped that the inclusion of a public hall for hire would make the building financially self-supporting, and unsuccessful attempts were made to fund the new building by novel means (having parish charities pay for its construction and then lease it back to the vestry) to avoid an increase in the rates.[2] A site on Wandsworth High Street was purchased, upon which the building was constructed by Mr Parsons of Wandsworth in 1880-2 for the relatively modest sum of £10,000. George Patrick's inelegant design placed the public hall on the first floor, extended out at the front over a carriageway and with a rear stage projection, carried on cast-iron columns. The vestry meeting room was on the ground floor, sandwiched between offices, presumably to the detriment of the room's lighting and ventilation. The front elevation, of red brick and Dumfries stone, was a rather artless mixture of the Italianate and the French Renaissance styles. The two-storey facade had a recessed carriageway on the ground floor (enclosed c.1897 and given a cast-iron and glass entrance porch), and a short corner tower, emphasised by a pavilion roof adorned with a clock.[3]

The first major alterations to the town hall were prompted by the widening of Wandsworth High Street in 1920. This necessitated a slight shortening of the building, but, as more extensive alterations then under then consideration, it was decided to erect a temporary facade. This steel-framed, cement-rendered arrangement, designed by George Elkington, remained in place until Ernest J Elford's eastern extension was built in 1926-7 and the two parts were given a single frontage. Designed in 1924, the substantial extension comprised council offices on the ground floor and a new public hall on the first floor with walkways linking the two halves of the building together. Elford opted for a simple neo-Classical approach that harked back to pre-war models and gave the building a rather old-fashioned appearance. The two-storey facade, of red brick over channelled stone and with a tiled pitched roof, originally had a near-central pedimented entrance with two shallow first-floor balconies. This was almost halved in length when the old town hall, which had suffered war-time bomb damage, was demolished in the

1970s. Elford's public hall originally had an elliptical plaster vault with heavy mouldings but these features disappeared from view when the whole building was modernised in 1962 by John and Sylvia Reid in the style of the day.

Not long after the completion of the remodelled town hall, Wandsworth Borough Council initiated an ambitious scheme for the redevelopment of part of the town as a 'civic centre'. Nearly five acres of land, bounded by Wandsworth High Street, Fairfield Street and York Road, were marked for redevelopment, with new council offices, to be built adjoining the existing town hall, as the centrepiece. The commission for the municipal buildings was given in 1935 to a local architect, Edward A Hunt, who, along with his father William Hunt (a former mayor of Wandsworth), was responsible for many public and commercial buildings in the capital. Built in 1935-7, this substantial (Wandsworth was one of the larger metropolitan boroughs) and grandly treated building - faced predominantly in stone with a relatively high degree of external decoration - has a surprisingly low-key presence. This is in part because Hunt elected to set the building, which has a triangular form planned around a courtyard, well within the site and both the layout and placement seem to have been largely determined by an overiding concern to minimise noise. The building is fully steel framed, with hollow-tile and reinforced-concrete floors and roofs, built by Dove Brothers of Islington, with steelwork by A D Dawnay & Sons. The external walls are of brick, faced with Portland and Corsham stone on the principal elevations, all handled in a classically derived manner with freely adapted detailing. Much of the High Street facade is set back behind a small forecourt garden, and is embellished with a bas-relief frieze depicting scenes from Wandsworth's history, carved by David Evans (whose work also adorns Poplar Town Hall) and John Linehan. The main entrance is at the corner, emphasised by projecting splayed wings with hipped pantiled roofs, beyond which is a carriageway leading through to the courtyard and ceremonial entrance. The return elevation, fronting Fairfield Street, is simpler, culminating in a projecting end block, containing a secondary entrance. The stone-faced inner courtyard has a handsome polygonal tiled fountain setting off the ceremonial entrance, which has the council's coat of arms over the entrance doors, and an ornate cornice frieze.

The layout of the three-storey building is clear and well-planned, with the 'civic' spaces, the council chamber and committee rooms, in the back wing, placed furthest from the road, and the various departmental offices occupying the other ranges. These areas are joined by a central corridor, forming a closed circuit to the upper floors. The architectural effort was inevitably focussed on the civic range, given a grand processional route comprising a richly finished entrance hall, lined with onyx panels and paved with marble, and an imperial stair, given a distinctive spiky scroll-pattern bronze balustrade that echoes the stone balcony over the carriageway. The stair hall is top lit by a rectangular lay- or skylight and an immense suspended bronze and glass electric light fitting. Projecting from the rear of the building is the council chamber, planned on a generous scale for its date and able to hold up to 95 members. The polygonal-shaped chamber is walled with oak panelling and panels of acoustic fabrics and it has a richly decorated fibrous plaster ceiling and a large laylight, glazed in a spiders' web pattern (the flat ceiling and the canted walls were also designed to aid the acoustics). The original fixed seating and mayoral dais survive, as does the public gallery, with seating for the press beneath. The mayor's parlour and committee rooms have oak panelling and enriched plaster ceilings, one of the latter rooms having been altered to allow for the insertion of a public gallery at one end, but even the general offices are finished with oak floors, doors and skirting, and simple cove cornices. These remarkably well-preserved and sympathetically maintained interiors, many still

with their original light fittings, add considerably to the charm and dignity of the building.

The group of buildings reached its present form when Culpin & Partners brick-faced Modern office extension was built in 1973-5. This was devised in 1970 as a seven-storey block, raised on stilts to allow for a car park beneath (but built simply as an eight-storey building), with a three-storey block occupying the site of the original town hall. This lower block was tactfully set back from the adjoining 1920s building, which has been renamed the 'Civic Suite'.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photographs by Sid Barker
Recorded 19th November 1998

NOTES

[1] *The Builder*, 12 May 1877,487.

[2] The building was actually funded by the more usual method of a loan from the Local Government Board.

[3] An application to the LCC for the porch was made in 1896-7 by George Patrick, LMA GCL/AR/BE/17/79256.

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GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 95894**

WESTMINSTER **NGR: TQ 2956 7943**

CAXTON STREET

CAXTON HALL (FORMERLY WESTMINSTER PAROCHIAL OFFICES)

SUMMARY

This ambitious exercise in the French Renaissance style was built in 1881-3 for the united parishes of St Margaret and St John, Westminster. Its purpose was to provide a meeting place for the vestry and the local district board of works, offices for local administration and a public hall. The architects, T S Lee and F J Smith, were selected following a limited competition in 1880, assessed by Charles Barry, although their design clearly could not have been built for the stipulated sum of £15,000. This was admitted by the architects, who suggested economising on the interior finish to reduce costs, but the final cost of the building was virtually double the original limit. After 1900 the building ceased to be a local government office although it retained some public use. Incremental alterations followed, including the incorporation of an adjoining building, formerly Christ Church School, and the infilling of some of the internal areas. By the 1980s the building had fallen into disuse and it has recently been extensively redeveloped.

REPORT

The principal elevations of the building were executed in red brick dressed with red Corsehilll stone and slate roofs. The use of a French Renaissance style reflected growing eclecticism in the design of London vestry halls in the 19th century, previously dominated by the Italianate style. The façade on Caxton Street (formerly Little Chapel Street) had two storeys over a basement, with an attic that was raised to two storeys at the centre. It had a central entrance and curved bay windows in the outermost bays, all rising to distinctive pavilion roofs with iron cresting. The abundant stone dressings included pilastered window surrounds, moulded string friezes and cornices with carved enrichment and a balustrated parapet. The carved panels over the windows incorporated medallion portraits of eminent men such as Chaucer, Shakespeare and Caxton and the door spandrels had reliefs depicting figures and cornucopias. When first built the entrance had flanking pedestals that carried figures of St Margaret and St John, lost when a porch with a canopy was added in the 20th century, itself subsequently removed. However, the first-floor niches retained full-length carved representations of Queen Victoria and King Edward VII, sculpted by a Mr Jackson of Maida Vale. The short return elevation to Palmer Street (previously Gardener's Lane) had a three-storey octagonal tower with a ground-f loor entrance. All the other elevations were of unadorned brick, with the exception of a two-storey rear entrance porch for the assembly hall, which had stone door architraves.

The layout of the building was largely determined by the awkward site, which was constricted to the west by an existing school building and to the north by the Metropolitan District Railway line. The competition brief brought further constraint, specifying a large hall on the ground floor

at the rear of the building and a first-floor vestry hall. Lee and Smith's plan had a suite of offices in the front range, entered from the Palmer's Street side via an entrance vestibule and a generously sized stair hall with an adjoining secondary stair. This entrance hall was linked to the public hall by a corridor with more offices to either side. The first floor had offices at the front with the vestry hall behind while the attic storey contained the hall-keeper's accommodation. Although the principal spaces were given an appropriate degree of finish they lacked the conspicuous grandeur of the next generation of London's town halls such as those built at Woolwich or Deptford. Display of civic pride was mainly limited to an extensive scheme of armorial stained glass by Hawkes of Birmingham, adorning the walls of the main stair, public hall and the vestry room. The principal stair was of wood and returned around the walls of the hall. It had wainscot panelling and newels with enriched baskets, carved friezes and turned and mitred ball terminals. The vestibule and stair hall were paved with Sicilian marble, while the axial and transverse corridors were floored with Yorkshire stone paving.[1] The public hall was curved at its western end and it had a coved ceiling. Its walls were decorated with Ionic pilasters and it had a shallow gallery, carried on ornate cast-iron brackets, to all but the east wall. A low platform was placed at the east end. The first-floor vestry hall was also simply decorated, with panelling walls and a flat ceiling divided by plaster ribs. A public gallery carried on square columns was placed at the south end, having been specified in the competition brief, which stated that it should be 'a more important feature than is usually the case'.[2] On the north wall was a fireplace, with a large pedimented overmantel, and two later doorways, inserted in the 1930s, giving access to the gallery of the public hall.

In 1900 the united parishes were merged into the new Metropolitan Borough of Westminster, which opted to use Westminster City Hall on Charing Cross Road. Lee and Smith's building was then renamed Caxton Hall, to commemorate the famous English printer whose press was believed to have been sited nearby. For the rest of the building what has followed is episodic alteration and modifications, to provide more function rooms and improved facilities. Various works were done in 1910 to improve the amenities of the public hall (without the authorisation of the London County Council). These alterations, designed by Messrs Wylson and Long, consisted primarily of an infill extension to the west side of the building to create a supper room, given a lantern roof light in 1913, and the reconstruction of the hall's platform.[3] Around this time the 19th-century brick-and-stone school on Palmer's Street was taken over. This Tudor-style building comprised a two-storey classroom range and a three-storey house. Part of its first floor then became a function room, known as the Tudor Room, although its timber roof trusses clearly recall its classroom origins. It achieved notoriety in 1940 when Sir Michael O'Dwyer was assassinated here.[4] In the early 1930s two smaller function rooms were created in Caxton Hall, one in the former vestry room, renamed the York Hall, and another in the south-east corner room on the first floor, subsequently known as the Kent Room. This space had previously been divided into two offices, with bay windows to both the north and south walls. One notable modification occurred in 1938, when air-raid shelters were constructed in the basement with 'Locksheet' steel linings, the first to be built for a London local authority. In the 1950s part of the ground floor became the Register Office for the City of Westminster, giving the building brief fame for its association with society and celebrity weddings. After the Register Office closed in 1977 the building fell into disuse and in 1991 an application was made to demolish all but the front range. Work on a different scheme, also involving partial demolition, commenced in the late 1990s.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 29th March 1995

NOTES

[1] Westminster City Archives, Specification of Works for the erection of the public hall.

[2] *The Builder,* 9 Oct 1880.

[3] The supper room was apparently used for a time by the Licensing Court, and later became the Norfolk Room.

[4] O'Dwyer was assassinated by Udham Singh in revenge for having ordered the Amritsar massacre of 1919.

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The Guardian, 1 March 1995.

GREATER LONDON **NBR INDEX NO: 96880**

WESTMINSTER **NGR: TQ 2938 7926**

VICTORIA STREET

WESTMINSTER CITY HALL

Work on this multi-storey block began in November 1962, to designs by Sir John Burnet, Tait and Partners. It was built for developers The Land Securities Investment Trust, Ltd., as the second phase of a scheme which also included a nine-storey office block, originally scheduled for completion by the end of July 1965. By October 1963, the tower block was presumably earmarked for the new local authority, the City of Westminster, which would officially come into being on 31 March 1965, for in that month the contractors, Taylor Woodrow Construction, Ltd. introduced an accelerated programme to have the building completed in time. In the event it was opened in mid-April 1965, providing over 173,000 sq. ft. of rented office space for one of Greater London's largest and wealthiest new councils, formed from the metropolitan boroughs of Westminster, St Marylebone and Paddington.

Constructionally and visually it differs radically from popular notions of municipal architecture, a reflection of its speculative origins as a commercial office block. Externally, this 22-storey (250 ft high) reinforced tower concrete frame is clad with Portland stone mullions and granite aprons under the double-glazed aluminium windows. Only the imposing entrance on the ground floor, labelled 'Westminster City Hall', and adorned with the city crest, allude to the civic function of the building. The interior represents a high-quality office development of its day. The stairs and lift lobbies are surfaced in terrazzo, office floors are mainly in teak blocks, and the joinery is mostly teak. Archetypally sixties-style circular lamps set flush in the lofty ceiling of the reception area or 'entrance hall' diffusely light the space, their disembodied forms reflected in the polished marble-clad walls and pillars. Six self-service lifts (a relatively novel technological innovation for the early 1960s) serve all office floors in the tower, and what must surely rank as amongst the most elevated civic spaces in London: the committee rooms and mayor's reception room on the 19th and 20th floors. These spaces, with their unrivaled views of the metropolis, have been recently refurbished with carpets and suspended ceilings. The room exhibiting the city regalia, including the three maces of the pre-1965 constituent boroughs, remains relatively unaltered, preserving the teak parquetry and display cabinets.

Originally Westminster City Council occupied the third floor up to the 20th floor, but now occupy the entire block. Currently the Department of Trade and Industry inhabit the adjoining nine-storey block.

Report by Jonathan Clarke
Photography by Sid Barker
Recorded 1st December 1998

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GREATER LONDON NBR INDEX NO: 95879

WESTMINSTER NGR: TQ 2776 8186

MARYLEBONE ROAD/GLOUCESTER PLACE

WESTMINSTER COUNCIL HOUSE (FORMERLY MARYLEBONE TOWN HALL)

SUMMARY
This building is amongst the most imposing of London's town halls, firmly within the 'Grand Manner' of Edwardian Classicism but with a sense of mass and simplicity of detailing that betokens the stripped classicism of the interwar years. It was built in 1914-20 for the Metropolitan Borough of Marylebone, following a high profile architectural competition in 1911, won by Sir Edwin Cooper. Its prominent siting on a major thoroughfare was acknowledged in use of Portland stone to clad the exterior and the weighty portico and square tower that dominate the main façade. Internally the layout reflects the disciplined planning of the *Beaux-Arts* tradition and the principal spaces are finished to an appropriately high standard, although the present council chamber dates from the 1960s, rebuilt following war time bomb damage. Adjoining the town hall, and linked to it by a bridge, is a public library built in 1939-40. This was also designed by Cooper as a muted version of the town hall minus the tower. When Marylebone became part of the City of Westminster in 1965 the town hall was renamed Westminster Council House and it continues in council use.

BACKGROUND

From its inception in 1900 Marylebone Borough Council was keen to replace its existing offices - a picturesque assemblage, dating in parts from the 18th century, on Marylebone Lane, known as the Old Court House - with a purpose-built municipal building commensurate with the status of the authority and the area it administered. A competition for the new buildings was held in 1911, despite the fact that the council was unable to take possession of the intended site until 1913. This specified that the main entrance was to be on Marylebone Road and that brick would be 'undesirable' for any but the rear elevation. Most unusually, a large electricity showroom was required, with a separate entrance from Gloucester Place. The competition attracted a high number of entries, a response which *The Builder* commented was 'out of all proportion to the importance of the occasion or the value of the work to be executed' although the journal gave extensive coverage to the results.[1] The first premium was awarded by the assessor Henry Hare to Edwin Cooper, then an up-and-coming architect recently established in his own practice. The Council borrowed £70,000 to pay for the new building and awarded the building contract to Messrs John Greenwood Ltd. The foundation stone was laid in 1914 but the formal opening was delayed until 1920, delayed by the commandeering of the building upon completion in 1915 by the Government.

In 1939 Cooper exhibited his design for a town hall extension, housing a new library and committee rooms, for a site adjoining the town hall.[2] His design was for a stripped down version of the town hall, echoing its central portico and Corinthian columns, characterised by Pevsner as having 'the Edwardian exuberance knocked out of it'.[3] This had a public welfare clinic to the rear, a public library on the lower two storeys and committee rooms and departmental offices on the second floor. An arched ashlar-faced bridge was built between the town hall and the extension at the second floor to link the buildings together, at the same time air raid shelters for

the staff and a transformer room were constructed below the private way between the two blocks.

DESCRIPTION

The exterior of the town hall is faced throughout with Portland stone and is an imposing composition, in the Graeco-Roman Classical style, emphasising volume and mass and given weighty detailing. The flat-roofed building has a broad façade with a rusticated semi basement, two storeys and a recessed attic storey. The elevation is dominated by a central tetrastyle portico with giant Corinthian columns and a tall square tower with a stepped spire in the spirit of Wren. Large stone lions flank the entrance steps, harking back to the grandest of nineteenth-century town halls, but the simplified detailing represents a move away from High Baroque Edwardian extravagance. The return elevation fronting onto Gloucester Place has projecting end bays, with Corinthian columns, that to the south incorporating a secondary entrance, whilst the rear elevation is plainly treated, and now has a largely blank central section of the 1960s.

The layout of the town hall is a model of its kind, reflecting the more disciplined approach to planning that had developed in the Edwardian period, emphasising symmetry, differentiation of functional areas, good lighting and efficient circulation. The rational disposition of the key spaces -committee rooms to the front, council chamber to the rear and the principal stair in the middle - was not new, but Cooper refined it and gave it 'a general air of convenience and obviousness'.[4] On the ground floor a marble-clad pillared vestibule gives onto a similarly finished stair hall, which has a broad Imperial stair and four massive square pillars, given abundant detail and spatial variety to create an illusion of drama and monumentality in a relatively small space. The north, east and west sides contain offices off corridors that return around the two internal light wells flanking the stair. Originally most of the south side of the ground floor was taken up by an electrical show room but this has been rebuilt as offices. In addition to the ceremonial stair, four secondary staircases are provided at the corners of the building, those to the south side with their own street entrances. The principal spaces were placed on the first floor with the centre front section given over to three interconnecting committee rooms (which can also be used as a reception room). These grand spaces were furnished in the style of Wren or his contemporaries, with walnut panelling, enriched plaster ceilings and carved chimney pieces, which they all still retain. However, the mayor's parlour and town clerks office to the east of the committee rooms are now used as a marriage suite and have undergone some alterations as a result.[5] These front rooms are linked to the council chamber at the rear by a Roman-style vestibule, forming a bridge over the stairs and given a balustrade with chunky urn balusters, a shallow coffered dome and a recessed plaster medallion depicting a head in profile.

The present council chamber (and the former electricity showroom beneath) were rebuilt by the City of Westminster in 1966-8, to the designs of T P Bennett and Sons, although preliminary drawings had first been made for Marylebone Borough Council in the late 1950s. The chamber had suffered serious bomb damage in 1940 but was given temporary repairs. When legislation was passed requiring all bomb-damaged buildings to be repaired by 1968 in order to qualify for cost of works payments, the council acted. Cooper's original chamber had been in the English Baroque style of the committee rooms, with walnut panelling enriched with limewood carving, oval-plan seating, a public gallery on square wooden piers and three large domed roof lights. Bennett reversed the position of the mayoral dais (now placed to the north side), and provided the more usual semi-circular seating arrangement. This straightforwardly modern chamber has

wood panelling (of ash) to the walls (to enhance the acoustics) except for the area behind the dais, which is finished in brown leather panels and detailed with a carved lime wood relief depicting the council's coat of arms. The chamber's anteroom was also rebuilt, clad in marble to the floor and walls to match Cooper's vestibule, as were the adjoining members' rooms.

Report by Joanna Smith
Photographs by Sid Barker
Recorded 1st December 1998

NOTES

[1] It also complained of having to inspect 180 detailed drawings, *The Builder* 1 Dec 1911, 628.

[2] At least one of the competition entries by Lanchester and Rickards had anticipated a possible extension on this site in their designs

[3] Pevsner, *Buildings of England London 1* ...., 333

[4] Verner O Rees, *The Plan Requirement of Modern Buildings,* (London 1931) 112.

[5] The mayor's parlour is now at Westminster City Hall, Victoria Street.

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LIST OF NBR INDEX FILES WITHOUT REPORTS

BARNET

95805 Barnet Register Offices (formerly UDC Offices), Wood Street
95807 Mamma Amalfi (formerly East Barnet Town Hall), Station Road

BEXLEY

95808 Erith Town Hall, Queens Road

BRENT

95895 Kilburn Board Offices, Salusbury Road (demolished)
95896 Willesden Town Hall, Dyne Road (demolished)
95812 Willesden Vestry Hall, Church Yard, Neasden Lane

BROMLEY

103212 Orpington Town Hall, Station Approach

HARROW

95837 Old Fire Station, High Street, Harrow on the Hill

HAVERING

95838 Romford Town Hall, Main Rd

HILLINGDON

95839 Barra Hall (Hayes Town Hall), Wood End Green Road

HOUNSLOW

103220 Hounslow Town Hall, (demolished)
82347 Magistrates Court (Brentford Town Hall), High Sreet
95844 Magistrates Court (Feltham Town Hall), Hanworth Road

ISLINGTON

95888 117 Charterhouse Street (St Sepulchre's Vestry Room)

KINGSTON UPON THAMES

103213 Kingston Guildhall, Market Place
98886 Malden Civic Buildings, New Malden High Street (demolished)
98887 Surbiton Council Offices, Ewell Road

LAMBETH

98888 Streatham Vestry Hall, Shrubbery Road

LEWISHAM

98889 Deptford Vestry Offices, Tanners Hill

MERTON

95853 Mitcham Vestry Hall, Lower Green
95854 Merton Civic Centre (formerly Crown House), London Road
98890 Merton Council Offices, Kingston Road

RICHMOND UPON THAMES

95862 Hampton Wick Local Board Offices, Upper Teddington Road
95861 Queens Hall (formerly Twickenham Town Hall), King Street
95860 Richmond Civic Centre, York Street
95859 York House, York Street

SUTTON

95868 Carshalton Library (Council Offices), The Square
95867 Crown Court (Wallington Town Hall), Woodcote Rd
95866 Sutton Civic Centre, St. Nicholas Way
98892 Sutton Municipal Offices, Throwley Road

TOWER HAMLETS

95873 Jack Dash House (Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Centre), Marsh Wall
95874 Limehouse District Board of Works, White Horse Road
95892 Poplar Board of Works Offices, Poplar High Street
98894 Poplar Town Hall, Newby Place (demolished)
98895 St Matthew's Town Hall, St Matthew's Row (demolished)
95872 Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent

WALTHAM FOREST

92062 Walthamstow Old Town Hall, Orford Road

WANDSWORTH

95878 Book House (Wandsworth Board of Works Offices, East Hill
103219 Tooting Vestry Hall (demolished)

WESTMINSTER

98897	Paddington Vestry Hall, Harrow Road (demolished)
98898	St Clement Danes Vestry Hall, Clements Inn (demolished)
98899	St James Vestry Hall, Piccadilly (demolished)
98900	St George's Vestry Hall, Mount Street (demolished)
95881	St Martin in the Field's Vestry Hall, Charing Cross Rd
95882	Strand District Boards of Works, Tavistock Street
98901	Westminster City Hall, Charing Cross Road (demolished)